

Why Antonio Margarito Should Have His License Reinstated

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Former welterweight title holder Antonio Margarito has applied for a boxing license in the state of Texas with the hopes of launching his comeback fight on the under-card of the Manny Pacquiao-Joshua Clottey WBO welterweight title fight being held at the newly opened Cowboys stadium in Dallas. February 12, 2010 marks the first day that Margarito's one year suspension from boxing will be up. Bob Arum, Margarito's promoter, is hoping to land Antonio a fight with the Pacquiao-Clottey winner if he is successful in his comeback bout.

The California State Athletic Commission suspended Margarito's boxing license, along with his trainer Javier Capetillo for one year after it was discovered that his hands had an illegal substance underneath his hand wraps (plaster-like which hardened once inserted) before he was about to enter the ring to defend his WBA welterweight title against Shane Mosley.

Margarito and Capetillo denied that they had any knowledge of the substance to a court, which went over like a lead balloon. Antonio says he didn't know - and let me add that there are some fighters who don't want to know. Margarito has since fired Capetillo. After the Commission made Margarito re-wrap his hands he was systematically taken apart and stopped by Mosley, thus losing his title. Well it's been a year and he has served his suspension and hoping to resume his successful boxing career.

This week Margarito's attorney, Daniel Petrocelli said,

"The most severe discipline possible is revocation for one year, so now that the year is up, he's reapplying. Aside from this incident, Antonio has been an exemplary boxing citizen. He did not even know of these gauze inserts. He was disciplined for hiring this trainer who broke the rules. Antonio has accepted his punishment."

And he's right, Margarito was handed a one year suspension or revocation of his boxing license and now that time has expired. Fighters have returned to the ring after committing such crimes as rape, murder and manslaughter. I had no problem with Ron Lyle and Mike Tyson returning to the ring after they served their time for their indiscretions. Why should Margarito be any different? And on top of that, it's never been proven beyond a doubt that Margarito tried to mickey his hand wraps or gloves in any other fight prior to fighting Shane Mosley.

Margarito isn't afforded the benefit of any of the doubt because it's widely accepted that when people do something illegal or break the law they usually don't get caught the first time they do it. This is something I'm totally on board with. The problem I have with Margarito being banned for life is - there's no absolute proof he's fought with loaded gloves/hands wraps before. And if we know nothing else, it's not like the guy is ever going to try it again.

When he fought Joshua Clottey four fights prior to fighting Miguel Cotto, the fight went 12-rounds and Clottey, who was hit plenty during the fight, didn't look like a gargoyle when it was over. In his next fight he lost his WBO title to Paul Williams via a 12-round unanimous

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decision. After getting off to a slow start and losing the first six rounds, Margarito came on and worked Williams over to the head and body during five of the last six rounds. Did Williams' face look as if he was mugged after the fight? No.

Two fights later Margarito fought a rematch with Kermit Cintron. Before he stopped Cintron with a body shot in the sixth round he beat Kermit from pillar to post during rounds two through five. And other than having a cut over his eye his face wasn't butchered up a bit. Isn't it reasonable to assume that if Margarito was fighting with loaded gloves that both the faces of Paul Williams and Kermit Cintron's would've been mangled up? But they weren't...

In Margarito's fight with Cotto, Miguel hit him with his best left-hooks to the head and body and Antonio kept plodding forward, forcing the fight. So whether his hand wraps were doctored up or not, it had nothing to do with him taking Cotto's best punches. And Miguel's face was marked up and swollen after he fought Mosley. I realize it was distorted after fighting Margarito, but the same thing is true after his fights versus Joshua Clottey and Manny Pacquiao.

Some observers believe that due to the Margarito fight Cotto's facial tissue became more susceptible to cuts and swelling. If that's the case it started with the Mosley fight, not the one versus Margarito.

In my opinion a fighter altering his hand wraps or gloves is just about one of the most egregious things a professional fighter can do. The consequences can be fatal for the fighter who is on the receiving end of the punches delivered by an opponent with boxing's version of brass knuckles. The evidence and facts look as if Antonio Margarito may have been trying to get away with it at least once. Shame on him and that cloud of suspicion will always be there for the rest of his career. However, he's fulfilled the terms of his punishment and didn't try to circumvent the system by going outside of the states in trying to fight.

Just because the commission missed catching the plaster coating pertaining to Margarito's gloves before the Mosley fight, that doesn't mean that every other commission didn't supervise and sign off on Margarito's hand wraps. Did he get away with it over and over and over again? I doubt that.

No one can say for sure if Margarito fought with an unfair advantage versus Cotto. It's very plausible that he may have. I just can't ban him for life based on plausibility. It's also interesting how neither Miguel Cotto or Shane Mosley want him banned for life. If they can live with his one known attempted indiscretion, so can I.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com