

Boxing Fans Deserve To Know The Truth

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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Only a little more than a year ago, former welterweight champion Antonio Margarito was on top of the world. He had just defeated Miguel Cotto in a spectacular performance that solidified his standing as one of the most exciting fighters in the world. He was heralded by many to be the next great Mexican champion in the tradition of Julio Cesar Chavez and Salvador Sanchez.

Presently, there are those who question if Margarito should be allowed to ever fight again.

The questions abound. Did Margarito “load” up his gloves with some kind of plaster based concoction just before his fight against Shane Mosley on January 24th 2009? That’s the story that’s most circulated around casual boxing fans. In their mind, Margarito was about to walk into the ring with a plaster cast underneath his gloves.

But just how strong is the evidence? I believe boxing fans should get a chance to view it before they rush to judgment. If I got my way, I’d like for the illegal “knuckle pad” and “plaster substance” to be displayed and weighed on a website. If Margarito is indeed guilty, I want to know just how far he went in his quest to win on that particular night before the anomaly in his wrappings was discovered by Mosley’s trainer Nazim Richardson.

There’s nothing darker in the sport of boxing than cheating inside the ring. Whether it’s Luis Resto who removed padding from his gloves with the help of trainer “Panama” Lewis to defeat and brutalize Billy Collins Jr. in 1983 or fighters who knowingly take banned performance enhancing drugs, it’s an appalling crime that shouldn’t go unpunished.

Think about the kind of blind ambition it takes to make the decision to unfairly pummel your opponent in a regulated sport like boxing. Is Margarito that crazy? Is this the same fighter I interviewed a dozen times who seemed so polite and humble? Did he get away with it in the past? Did Kermit Cintron and Miguel Cotto both get victimized in the ring by an opponent using a potentially deadly advantage?

Some reports I’ve read throughout the media paint Antonio Margarito as someone who’s very much capable of reaching into the darkest corner of his soul in an attempt to defeat Mosley. If that’s the case, and the evidence corroborates those reports, then Margarito should no longer be allowed to be part of the sport. There are too many gyms overflowing with talented fighters waiting to prove themselves worthy of a shot at changing their lives forever. And they’re willing to fight fairly.

The theories I’ve heard about the Margarito case differ within the minds of several boxing industry insiders I’ve spoken to. Some of them blame Margarito’s trainer Javier Capetillo. It was he, they say, who wrapped his hands and inserted the “knuckle pad” without his fighter’s knowledge. Capetillo also had his license revoked by the California State Athletic Commission.

Others believe that Margarito knew exactly what he was doing. That any fighter who’s been in

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the sport for more than a decade has built up a sensitivity to anything that would likely be inserted into his gloves or within his wraps.

Who's right? What happened? The fans and I need to know.

Margarito wants to fight again.

After being suspended for a year by the California State Athletic Commission, the Tijuana based fighter submitted an application to fight in the state of Texas on the Pacquiao vs. Clotey card on March 13th. With the Texas commission being unable to come to a decision, the case will be further reviewed and decided upon by the C.S.A.C. on February 22nd. Rumor has it he'll end up fighting May 8th on a Pay Per View in Mexico. His promoters at Top Rank must feel pretty confident since they've reportedly lined up Carson Jones as a possible opponent.

So what happens now? I believe Margarito will fight again. He's always been a big ticket seller. He sold out the Home Depot Center when he fought Paul Williams and the Staples Center when he lost to Mosley. The anticipation of seeing Margarito perform under a microscope from now on will also attract an added audience.

He'll undoubtedly be questioned about the controversy several times before he fights and he'll get to make his case in front of the media. Will he be able to restore his image and resume his once flourishing career? Or will he always be remembered as the man who tried to wear a "plaster cast" into the ring but got caught?

The fans should have the final word on deciding whether they choose to support the "Tijuana Tornado". After all, it's they who fuel the sport. They're the ones that buy tickets and pay for the pay per views. It's their money that pays the officials, the fighters and promoters of each event. It's because of this reason that I'd like to ask the California State Athletic Commission to make the evidence available for all to see somewhere on cyberspace. It's important that no more false or potentially damaging rumors are circulated.

Antonio Margarito deserves the chance to defend himself and boxing fans deserve to know the truth.

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