

Sugar, Money & Bolo In L.A.

Written by David A. Avila
Thursday, 04 March 2010 18:00

Driving into downtown L.A. with its myriad of freeways and off ramps can be daunting. One missed exit can send you to Pasadena or worse.

Luckily, after passing the Staples Center, all was clear for a landing in a cheap parking lot two blocks from the Nokia Theater.

For five bucks I found parking and once I walked briskly to LA Live where the press conference for Sugar Shane Mosley and Floyd "Money" Mayweather would be held in an hour, it was clear that fans, press and promoters had already arrived on Thursday.

A line about 50 yards long was my destination to pick up media credentials for the press conference. Television crews, radio jockeys, newspaper columnists and the photographers all had to wait to get checked in.

About three or four hundred people were already surrounding the small barricades where the press conference would be held under the Nokia marquee and aside the ESPN Zone. The weather was a pleasant 69 degrees with no wind.

All of us media types were told there was food available. I should have known. When there are no photographers around it usually means they're off eating something. Nobody eats like photographers.

Walking into the ESPN Zone I spot Richard Schaefer walking in with a guy that looks like Joe Calzaghe. It is Joe Calzaghe. Later on he would be introduced to the public. Hmmm? Does this mean he's coming back?

In the dining area as I pass through the tables somebody reaches out and taps me on the shoulder, it's Sergio Mora and his trainers Dean Campos and John Montelongo. Mora will be on the April 3 fight card that features Bernard Hopkins against Roy Jones Jr. He looks fit to fight.

I spot an old sports reporter buddy Louie who works for a television studio. We just sit and talk about the coming fights and then we're joined by Ring Magazine's web site editor Michael Rosenthal and later Roger another boxing and MMA writer.

Near 1 p.m. we depart the restaurant to get our seats outside for the press conference. I pick out a front row seat where I can have no obstruction for my video camera.

About 45 minutes there is still no sign of either Mosley or Mayweather. Two Tecate girls are standing in front of the stage and strike up poses on requests. It's almost 2 p.m. when the conference begins.

During the introductions by Schaefer, I could see one of the Tecate girls mouthing something to

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the other Tecate girl 50 feet to her left. After several more introductions Oscar De La Hoya begins to say some things when suddenly one of the Tecate girls collapses in a heap.

“Somebody help her,” shouts De La Hoya.

People rush to her side and give her some water. One smart aleck standing outside the barricade yells “I’ll volunteer to give her mouth to mouth.”

There’s always a wisecracker in the crowd.

Finally, Mosley and Mayweather speak.

“There are five ways to beat Mosley,” said Mayweather alluding to his five losses.

Mosley says on May 1, Mayweather will have loss number one.

This is the third and final day of the kick off tour for their fight that will take place on May 1, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

“Tickets are almost gone,” says Schaefer.

What? They just went on sale two days ago.

Mayweather promises to show that skills wins fights, not speed or power. I guess he’s saying that Mosley has no skills.

Mosley smiles that smile that means I’m going to remember that comment.

“People always think I’m just about power and knocking guys out,” said Mosley. “I’m one of the master boxers today.”

Roger Mayweather, who usually has a lot to say, didn’t seem too willing to give Mosley ammunition.

“It’s going to be a good fight,” said Roger Mayweather. “Somebody is going to get his butt kicked.”

Probably the most vocal was surprisingly Nazim Richardson who acknowledged that Mayweather’s fighting skills were superb but still flawed.

“You can’t hit his (butt) with a handful of rice,” Richardson said, but also added that he’s seen the openings but does not want to give Mayweather’s camp a heads up. “I’m not a favor of 24/7 for that reason.”

All systems are go for the fight that Schaefer predicts will break the all time pay-per-view record set in 2007 when Mayweather fought De La Hoya.

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“This will sell 3 million,” Schaefer predicts.

Shrine Exposition Center

Damian “Bolo” Wills (27-2-1) dominated the stubborn Billy Willis (12-19-1) for four rounds in a heavyweight bout scheduled for eight. But after receiving punishing blows the fight was stopped at the end of four for a technical knockout win for Wills.

“He’s still a work in progress,” said Sanchez about his newest pupil. “He still has a few bad habits we’re trying to iron out.”

Wills had the edge in speed, power, movement and height. Put that altogether and it proved to be the winning combination over Willis who took a pounding in every round but never tasted the canvas.

Sanchez says that Wills has all the tools to make it to the top level, but first he needs some more work.

“He’s getting there,” said Sanchez.

Ernie Zavala returned to the ring after a five year absence and needed one live round before shaking the rust against Oregon’s Jason Davis. After that first round Zavala opened up.

In the third round Davis seemed to hurt his right arm and tried shaking it loose. When the round finished Dr. Paul Wallace took a look at the arm and advised referee Lou Moret to stop the fight.

Zavala was ecstatic. He’s trained by Freddie Roach.

Perhaps the best fight of the night was El Monte’s left-handed Ricky Duenas (6-1) tackling Chino’s Johnny Suarez (5-3-2) in a junior welterweight fight. For six rounds both battered each other with precision and skill, but it was Duenas who seemed to get the better by a little in each of the rounds.

Suarez found a mark for his right hand leads, but Duenas found openings for his left hands and right hooks. Though he won by unanimous decision, it was not an easy fight. Each round was contested by Suarez, but Duenas always seemed to have more. The judges scored it 60-54 for Duenas who is trained by Ben Lira. The crowd clapped for both fighters at the end and stood up and clapped for Suarez as he left the ring.

Several mixed martial arts bouts took place on the same card. It was good to see Big John McCarthy do his thing. He’s the best MMA referee in the business.

The first MMA card pit Corona, California’s Kenny McKorkell (7-2) against Riverside’s Ronald Lebretom (5-5) in a light heavyweight bout. It took only 2:59 for McKorkell to apply a triangle choke and force a submission from Lebretom.

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Corona's Brian Adam (4-2) didn't fare as well. He was beaten by unanimous decision against Riverside's Armando Sanchez (10-7) in a featherweight contest.

Riverside's Andrew Flores (8-7) picked up a win by technical knockout against Tulare, California's Rafael Del Real (6-17) at 1:55 of the first round of a middleweight bout. Flores tackled Del Real to the ground and applied hammer fists that forced referee McCarthy to stop the fight.

San Bernardino's Joseph Lewis (2-1) used his speed and take downs to beat Cesar Urquilla (1-2) in a three round welterweight fight. All three judges scored it 29-28 for Lewis.

Palm Spring's Jorge Valdez used his long limbs to beat Riverside's Todd Willingham at 2:23 of the third round by submission. A leg triangle choke forced Willingham to tap out.

In another boxing card, Mexico's Heder Rivas (5-1) beat San Diego's Nick Briannes (1-4) by technical knockout at the end of round one. Briannes suffered a separated shoulder and could not continue.