

Honorio Continues World Title Hunt

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
Thursday, 04 March 2010 18:00

Blam! A fist slammed into the face of twelve year old Martin Honorio. As he remembers it, this was part of every day life in the rough streets of Itztapalapa which lies on the outskirts of Mexico City. It's the kind of place where children have to turn into men way too quickly. "There are parts of the capital (Mexico City) where you have to really watch yourself. You have to fight in order to survive. There was always someone trying to take advantage of you," says Honorio. "That's when I decided I had to learn to defend myself."

It was for that reason that Honorio (27-4, 14 KO's) joined a boxing gym and also started selling bottled water in the local neighborhoods so he could pay for the membership fee and some needed equipment. After some instruction and time, he was more than able to hold his own against any would be bullies. "If anyone wanted to fight I was ready," Honorio said. "I didn't lose many fights after that."

"Once I continued in the gym I really started liking boxing," he recalled. The sport he once practiced for street survival became his calling. "I was captivated by the training and the one on one nature of it."

The 30 year old has traveled far in his quest for fistic glory. Along the way he's hit some bumps on the road but he's persisted as any good fighter must do. He now holds the NABO lightweight title (135 lbs.) which he won from the hard punching John Molina in November of 2009 at the Pechanga Casino in Temecula where he returns on Friday as he headlines against Dominican Wilton Hilario (12-0, 9 KO's).

Molina stepped into the ring against Honorio undefeated in eighteen fights having stopped fourteen of his victims before the final bell. Sometimes in high light reel, brutal fashion. Some saw the fight against Honorio, who normally fights as a 130 pounder, as a stepping stone towards greater things for the charismatic Molina.

Those who underestimated Honorio's chances didn't take into account that he had beaten the also undefeated, eventual world champion Steven Luevano. He had also defeated world class fighter Rogers Mtagwa by split decision in late 2006.

Instead it was Honorio's spectacular one punch, fifty six second loss to world champion Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero that stuck in most people's minds. It was a perfectly thrown, wicked straight left that seemed to have materialized out of nowhere. It shattered Honorio's dream of winning the featherweight (126 lbs.) title. "It was a sad night for me. I couldn't believe it. I worked so hard and for it to end that quickly was disappointing," he recalled. "I just got caught with a great punch I didn't see. There are no excuses. I couldn't recover."

Although Molina is a good young fighter, he certainly hasn't developed Guerrero's skill set. His rise was achieved through raw, sheer force and impressive knockouts. Yet Honorio wasn't intimidated by the brash lightweight out of Covina, California. In front of a national audience on

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Showtime, Honorio gave his opponent a boxing lesson. "I knew I had to go in there and do the work I prepared for," he said. "I used a lot of movement. You can't sit and wait for fighters like Molina who come at you so I used my distance and speed."

After all was said and done, Honorio took the unanimous decision win and the vacant NABO title in what turned out to be an easier than expected fight. Although it was known that Molina had been struggling with the flu before the fight, one can't be clear as to what effect it had on the outcome. "I heard him comment that he was sick but there shouldn't be any excuses. He's a young fighter and it wasn't his night," Honorio said. "I've lost some tough ones too but that's where you learn the most and he's still got a good future ahead of him."

While I definitely believe that Molina walked into the ring sick, I also believe that a part of him felt he could still beat Honorio. If you have a burgeoning career and you're truly ill why step into the ring against a solid fighter like Honorio otherwise? And why bring up the issue after the fight? As far as I saw it, Honorio's crafty fighting and slick movement didn't allow Molina to set himself for the heavy bombs he's used to unleashing.

Unfortunately for Molina it doesn't look like a rematch is part of Honorio's future plans anytime soon. "I don't think so. The fight already happened and it doesn't need to happen again," he said. "In order to rematch him I would have to fight in his division and I don't want to do that. I plan to go back to 130 pounds after this fight."

Winning the NABO title means an automatic top ten slot within the WBO rankings. But it's a major world title Honorio dreams about. "I want another title shot. I want to win the world championship badly," he commented. "If it happens, then my dream will finally be accomplished."

The first step is getting past Hilario. "I'm not one to underestimate anyone. I've been training with sparring partners like Salvador Sanchez, Israel Vazquez and Charles Huerta and they've made me work hard. On Friday the fans will see me better than ever," Honorio said. "There will be exciting action that night. I'm going to make sure the audience feels privileged to be there. I already did all the work in the gym. Now I have to put it all together in the ring."

Honorio vs. Hilario is the main event for ESPN2's Friday Night Fights. Rico Ramos and John Molina will also be on the Goossen-Tutor promoted card. Tickets priced at \$70 Premium Ringside (Rows 1-3), \$60 (Ringside Rows 4-7), \$45 (VIP rows 8-11) and \$30 General Admission (Rows 12 and beyond) are available at the Pechanga Box Office from 10am to 10pm or by calling 1-877-2WIN and press 2.

Doors open at 5:00 PM. First Bout is at 6:00 P.M.

On Youtube: Martin Honorio vs. John Molina <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aVMlJdky60>

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