

E.L.A.'s Sergio Mora & Frankie Gomez Shake Out

Written by David A. Avila
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MONTEBELLO-Standing side by side for the dozen or so photographers snapping away were Sergio "The Latin Snake" Mora and newly signed prospect Frankie Gomez both dressed in black on Monday.

Two fighters from East L.A.: one a former world champion and in the prime of his career and the other a youngster with blazing hand speed and the look of yet another champion but perhaps I'm going too fast.

Mora (21-1-1) finally jumps back in the ring when he faces Texas middleweight Calvin Green (21-4-1) and Gomez makes his pro debut against Clayvonne Howard (2-3) at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas on April 3. It will be shown on pay-per-view.

While wrapping his hands Mora looked across the gym in Gomez's direction and remarked on the youngster's talent.

"He has natural talent," said Mora, 29, who sparred with Gomez a few rounds when he was unsure what kind of opponent he would be facing. "That kid has all the talent in the world."

Gomez, who weighs between 135 and 140 pounds, has been fighting in the East L.A. area for quite awhile and kind of caught many by surprise. It was during the AIBA World Championships that the rest of the world got to see what Southern Californians glimpsed of Gomez: speed, power, aggressiveness and poise.

Nobody knows if he can handle the punch of a full fledged professional prizefighter, but if he can then expect the same kind of lightning reflexes and snapping blows reminiscent of another East L.A. product of your choice: Paul Gonzalez, Oscar De La Hoya, Shawn Estrada, Joey Olivo or Panchito Bojado.

Coincidentally, Bojado's younger brother Angel Bojado is a heck of a fighter too. Both he and his older brother Panchito are working out at Mora's gym on a daily basis. Angel is only 16 but has innate skills and reflexes like his brother.

Working in the ring was Mora who is no slouch either. He's one of only two men who will ever be able to say he beat the late great Vernon Forrest.

"I learned so much from those 24 rounds that I boxed with Vernon Forrest," said Mora, who beat Forrest in their first encounter and lost the rematch. That last fight was Forrest's final appearance in the ring before he was gunned down in Georgia during a robbery. "Just being in there against him he showed me so many things."

Mora said the great Georgia fighter was a master of dictating a pace, of combination punching and numerous other things.

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"I caught him by surprise in the first fight," said Mora. "I lost the second fight but I learned a lot from that fight too."

The East Los Angeles prizefighter has been unlucky in the ring since fighting Forrest. "I've had four or five fights canceled," said Mora, adding that one was a world title fight against Kelly Pavlik whose hand became infected and was forced to pull out. "I don't know anything about my opponent except his name."

Dean Campos, who trains Mora, said several fighters have been inked then nixed since Golden Boy Promotions added Mora to the Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones Jr. fight card.

"We did lot of sparring with big guys, little guys, he'll be ready for the fight," said Campos.

After Mora worked the mitts and shadow boxed, then came Gomez with his blazing hand speed and crackling punches.

Gomez, a rather shy youngster who just turned 18, said he turned professional after suffering through the horrible judging in amateur boxing.

"The judges (in international competition) only like the Cubans and Indians," said Gomez about fighting in international amateur competition. "You can land a good body shot and they won't give you a point."

Gomez said his advisors decided to seek the professional route.

"I left it up to my team," said Gomez.

Several boxing promoters engaged in a bidding war for the East L.A. boxing product including Top Rank and Golden Boy Promotions who won out in the end.

"I just try to stay focused and do my best," Gomez said meekly.

Inside the ring he is anything but meek.