

If His Story Is To Be Believed, Margarito's Ignorance Is At a Criminal Level

Written by Rick Folstad
Tuesday, 06 April 2010 17:00

Unless you were standing over Antonio Margarito with a professional eye, watching him get his hands wrapped, it's hard to say whether Margarito was part of the plot to commit a crime against Sugar Shane Mosley or just an innocent bystander.

The California State Athletic Commission decided on the former. Promoter Bob Arum and Margarito's attorney, Daniel Petrocelli, decided on the later.

But while there hasn't been a lot of new information coming down from the court house in Sacramento, Arum and Petrocelli are on a crusade to clear Margarito's name.

To hear Arum and Petrocelli tell it, Margarito might as well have been sitting in another room when the dastardly crime was attempted. They say he's innocent of all charges, but that's what you would expect a couple members of your gang to say. The only thing I get coming away from their conference call Monday is that Margarito is either a cheater or an airhead; and Javier Capetillo, Margarito's former trainer, has been quickly and easily tossed under the bus, a simple casualty of war.

"I have been distressed about the amount of misinformation out there and people making conclusions based on the misinformation," is how Bob Arum opened the call.

From that point on, it was pretty much Petrocelli explaining why Margarito should be fully pardoned and hoisted onto our shoulders and paraded down main street. Speaking in his best legalese, he claimed several times that Margarito "had no knowledge or participation in the events," that led to the one-year revocation of Margarito's license to box in the United States.

According to Petrocelli, the problem was that Capetillo wrapped Margarito's hands using - gasp - already used and tainted gauze knuckle pads. Those pads were found to contain calcium and sulfur, two of the primary elements found in plaster of paris. At least that's what the guys in the California Department of Justice laboratory tell us.

Plaster of paris?

Oh, oh.

But Petrocelli explained that calcium and sulfur are found in a variety of substances, including hand crème, and the pads weren't like concrete or rock, but made of soft gauze.

"Antonio offered up his right hand to the inspector and to Mosley's trainer and said, 'look, I have nothing to hide. Look at it. Take it off,' " Petrocelli said. "They found the same thing, a worn, used and a little hard (knuckle pad insert), almost like it had been in water and dried, and it was harder than just the soft gauze. Both knuckle pads were confiscated."

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But the big question is, how could Capetillo wrap Margarito's hands using a formerly worn, harder knuckle pad without Margarito noticing it? Fighters pay very, very close attention when their hands are being wrapped. Why didn't Margarito notice something was different about his wraps? And why was Capetillo using second-hand knuckle pads in the first place? Couldn't afford new ones? Left the new ones at home?

Let's ask Petrocelli.

"He obviously knew his hands were being wrapped, but what he didn't know was this: There is this little 2-inch long and maybe 1-inch wide gauze pad and embedded inside, there was another piece of gauze and it was that other piece of gauze - which I'll call the gauze insert - that the inspectors thought was irregular. Not the main gauze knuckle pad that rests on the knuckle. And again, these are pre-made and (Margarito) is sitting there extending his hands and his trainer puts on a gauze knuckle pad and inside the gauze knuckle pad is this further gauze insert that's got some irregular chemical substances on them according to the governments test report. How is (Margarito) supposed to know about that?"

He's supposed to pay attention.

Petrocelli goes on: "Because (Margarito) had no knowledge or participation of any of this, he should not be punished at all, let alone having his license revoked."

You know the story. It was the night of Jan. 24, 2009, and Margarito was getting ready to fight Mosley in California for the WBA welterweight title. Prior to the fight, Mosley's trainer, Naazim Richardson, went into Margarito's locker room to check Margarito's hand wraps, make sure all the rules were being followed.

But Richardson didn't like what he saw, and Margarito was told to have his hands re-wrapped because of knuckle pad "irregularities."

Later that night, Mosley stopped Margarito and the accusations grew and the CSAC had the confiscated pads analyzed and determined that Margarito attempted to use a hard pad.

"Margarito testified and all the evidence is fully in accord that he simply had no knowledge of any of this," Petrocelli said.

Now, with his U.S. suspension over, Margarito - who could have fought in Mexico during his suspension, but chose not to - is scheduled to return to the ring on May 8 against Roberto Garcia in a pay-per-view fight from Aguascalientes, Mexico.

As for Margarito fighting again in the United States, Arum said he's looking at something this summer, maybe a fight in Texas.

"People who really know very little about the facts would like to sentence this guy to purgatory for the rest of his life," Arum said. "And that's really outrageous and wrong."

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What's really outrageous and wrong is what Margarito and his former trainer are accused of trying to do.

Maybe Margarito didn't know. Maybe he is innocent of intentionally trying to use illegal hand wraps. But he still has to shoulder some of the blame. He's responsible for himself, and his alleged ignorance is a crime in itself.