

Ponce De Leon Expects Furious Battle With Mares

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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Daniel Ponce De Leon was given a gift when he was born on the twenty seventh day of July of 1980. Little did his parents now that baby Daniel was granted the gift of brutal punching power in his fists. Little did they know that De Leon would some day end up being an Olympian and a two division world champion with his fights being broadcast all over the world.

That was a lot to expect from a Tarahumara kid from the Chihuahuan Sierra of Mexico where

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it's tough enough to survive, let alone thrive. By the time he started boxing as an amateur, De Leon was already dreaming of the bright lights. "These big fights and big moments are everything I've ever wished and prayed for since I was a kid," said De Leon from his home in Los Angeles. "My thirteen year career as a pro has taken a tremendous amount of hard work and dedication."

De Leon (44-4, 35 KO's), the WBC featherweight champion, is in the final phase of preparation for the upcoming defense of his title on May 4 against undefeated Abner Mares (25-0-1, 13 KO's). Mares, who was a bantamweight and junior featherweight champion, is looking to add a third title to his resume. The bout is the co-main event to the highly anticipated Showtime Pay Per View broadcast of Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Robert Guerrero from Las Vegas, Nevada.

The elite matchup is reminiscent of fights like Carlos Zarate vs. Alfonso Zamora, the "battle of little giants" Salvador Sanchez vs. Wilfredo Gomez and Rafael Marquez vs. Israel Vazquez. Adding to the intrigue is the fact that Mares is a stable-mate of De Leon. Both fighters are managed by astute L.A. businessman Frank Espinoza. De Leon admits it's strange to fight Mares, who he's always been friendly with.

"It was surprising when Frank called me with the fight," he remembers. "I never thought I'd ever fight Abner. But when the fight was signed, I decided to look at it as a fight between two athletes who want to prove their superiority in the ring. It's not personal, but it will be a fierce competition."

Mares has a skill set that most fighters envy. He's considered the technician in this battle, the one with the swift footwork and fast, accurate combinations. De Leon is the awkward boxer-puncher who is a nightmare to prepare for. After all, how do you prepare for punches coming from strange angles and De Leon's unorthodox style? It's not like there are many sparring partners who can emulate De Leon in the ring. Then there's his concussion-causing punching power. He punches so hard that 35 of his 44 wins have been due to the power he exerts with his fists. Having had the chance to witness De Leon's handiwork from front row several times, the story line has been consistent. His opponents start off well and eventually crumble mentally and then physically after enduring brutal punishment.

During one particular outing on January 21, 2012 against young up and comer Omar Estrella, you could feel the spirit of the Tijuana pugilist being broken with every violent punch De Leon landed. After a decent first round by Estrella, De Leon turned up the heat and by the sixth

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round, Estrella had enough. He remained on the floor battered and bruised. But Mares is a whole different story. Not only is he great technically, he's physically and mentally one of the toughest in the sport. Mares' last five wins have been against former world champions. As far as planning for Mares is concerned, De Leon aims to keep it simple.

"I'm going to put a lot of pressure on him and I'm going to use my experience to determine when I have to box and when I have to brawl," he said. "I've fought a lot of great fighters in my career and I've learned my lessons well. I'm going to use all that knowledge to win."

He's confident Mares will walk away with a first loss on his record. "I expect Abner Mares to come prepared and focused. He's a warrior who doesn't back down and I don't back down. This is going to be a fierce battle and I'm ready for it physically and mentally," said De Leon. "May fourth will be a great night for me. It won't be easy, but I look forward to victory."

Don't miss this one. You'd regret it.

On the web: A great preview of the Ponce De Leon Vs. Mares fight from Showtime:

{youtube}eMIQU3ZOYSw{/youtube}

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the Roast says:

This is the fight of the night. Get on your feet at the first bell because hell is coming to the undercard. This fight would be a great main event on HBO or Showtime. Mares should win but Ponce is always dangerous. Just missed beating Broner. Razor thin loss to "The Problem." This will be good for as long as it lasts. I expect these bangers to bang heads and come away bloody somewhere after 7 or 8 action packed rounds. Mares by TD. Possible rematch. Or Mares goes straight to Santa Cruz. Another cant miss war.