

RON BORGES' FINAL PREFIGHT VEGAS DIARY

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 04 December 2008 19:00

LAS VEGAS – The tale of the tape was re-written last night but in the end remained unchanged.

An angry Freddie Roach demanded Oscar De La Hoya be forced to change both the way he tapes his hands and the tape that he uses, claiming both violated Nevada State Athletic Commission regulations.

Roach worked De La Hoya's corner a year ago against Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and thus had intimate knowledge of how Joe Chavez had been taping De La Hoya's hands over the years and claimed he illegally put tape directly on his skin and also taped in a way between his fingers that raised small ridges around the knuckles that could not only be felt through the gloves but would create a higher likelihood of his fighter, Manny Pacquiao, being cut.

Roach also claimed Chavez used tape two inches wide on De La Hoya's hands that would bunch up and create a ridge line along the knuckles that was both lethal and illegal.

After a heated meeting with executive director Keith Kizer and several members of the commission staff while lawyers from both camps hovered on the periphery waiting to find some way to charge a fee, the commission ruled De La Hoya could tape his hands as always with the exception of having to cut the two-inch wide tape in half.

"It's not legal to tape that way in Nevada," Roach insisted but the ruling went against him.

Pacquiao came in well below the welterweight limit yesterday at 142 pounds, but then again so did Oscar De La Hoya, who weighed 145. That is the lowest De La Hoya has been in 11 years. On Jan. 18, 1997, De La Hoya weighed 140 pounds for his fight with Miguel Angel Gonzalez. Whether that means anything or not no one will know until late tomorrow night but Roach seemed to feel it was a sign that De La Hoya may have over trained.

At least he felt that way until he began to think about his fighter coming in at 142.

"I was a little surprised by that," Roach admitted. "That was a little light. But Oscar came in light too. I don't want to imply anything was going on with the scales but maybe they weren't calibrated right. At the end of the day, my guy was light but so was Oscar."

Weight is not really the issue however. The real issue will be reach, general stature and strength and Pacquiao's fighting style, which is all about aggression. Normally that has worked to his advantage but that may not be the case Saturday night in the opinion of one man who knows a bit about aggression and the value of being the bigger man.

That is a lesson Bernard Hopkins taught to not only De La Hoya, who he stopped in nine

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rounds, but also to Felix Trinidad and Kelly Pavlik.

“Pacquiao is going to fight his typical fight,” Hopkins said. “That’s Oscar’s style. That’s made for him. If you know a guy’s coming to rob your house, you don’t go outside. No need to chase the burglar.

“You just load up the shotgun, sit in the rocker and wait for him.”

Bad blood seemed to boil over yesterday when World Boxing Council president Jose Sulaiman arrived in the media center at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in a wheel chair and he ran into Bob Arum, the promoter of Manny Pacquiao.

Arum and Sulaiman have had many dealings over the years, some good and many not so good but their relationship hit a new low when Sulaiman reportedly tried to jam Pacquiao for a “sanctioning fee” for Saturday night’s showdown with Oscar De La Hoya even though no WBC title was on the line. When Pacquiao’s people refused, the WBC made menacing noise about stripping the lightweight champion of their title but eventually thought better of it.

Such extortion efforts are not quickly forgotten however. Earlier in the week Sulaiman had called Arum’s office to inform him he was coming to Las Vegas for the fight. When Arum asked why he was telling him Sulaiman was stumped for an answer.

Unabashed, Sulaiman called to Arum Friday afternoon as the 77-year-old promoter was walking past him, asking why he hadn’t stopped to say hello.

Never one to miss an opportunity, Arum said, “I got to go to the toilet.”

End of conversation.

The weigh-in was televised on ESPN and held up nearly 15 minutes while the fighters and a crowd of around 3,000 inside the MGM Grand Garden Arena waited for the leader in sports programming to find an opening in their programming to televise two men step on the scales in their underwear.

Before they did, former middleweight and light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins, who stopped De La Hoya in a similar size mismatch several years ago, took the microphone to assure the crowd split evenly between Mexican and Filipino fans that, “Oscar De La Hoya will win this fight.”

Hopkins also promised a knockout and then suggested the following to those Pacquiao fans who were hollering at him: “Anybody got a problem with that I’ll be outside.”

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No one followed him after he left.

As Hopkins stood in the background on the stage, comedian George Lopez kept insulting Arum, who promotes Pacquiao, until he could finally find a way to get Hopkins involved as well as insulting him at the same time.

“Bernard!” Lopez hollered at the 43-year-old Hopkins. “Kick Bob Arum’s ass. He’s 78.”

Then he turned to Arum and remarked, “Bob, fight him for a new hip.”

Tomorrow’s semi-main event will be a real coming out party for young prospect Victor Ortiz, known around Golden Boy Promotions as the “Golden Child,” because he’s widely perceived to be the future of De La Hoya’s promotional company.

He will face Jeffrey Resto (22-2, 13 KO) in the semi-main event, his first. Vicious Victor, as he’s known, intends to set the stage for a big win for De La Hoya but Resto has other ideas.

“Victor’s in for a big surprise,” Resto said. “I quit my job to train for this fight.”