Written by Rick Folstad
Thursday, 24 March 2011 17:35

*Anyone liking Solis for the upset? (Chris Farina-Top Rank)*He isn't Juan Manuel Lopez or Chris John, but Jorge Solis did put up a pretty good fight against Manny Pacquiao four years ago. Sure, he was stopped in the eighth, but so what?

Depending on your perspective, that's how far we've come or fallen in the fight game since the Manny years. If a guy loses to Pacquiao, we still consider it a badge of honor if he looked good in losing. We don't care if he only lasted six or eight rounds as long as he landed a punch or two before he was counted out.

That seems to be the important stuff on Solis. He looked good for awhile against Pacquiao, who is probably better now than he was in 2007, while Solis isn't as good. And one of them put on a little weight.

Solis (40-2-2, 29 KOs), from Guadalajara, Mexico, is scheduled to fight WBA and IBF featherweight champ Yuriorkis Gamboa (19-0, 15 KOs) Saturday night at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City (HBO Boxing After Dark). It's part of what they're calling "Featherweight Fury."

Gamboa is favored in this fight, even though Solis "looked good" fighting Pacquiao. If he had somehow beaten Pacquiao back in 2007, well, we probably wouldn't be talking about this fight right now.

On a conference call with Gamboa on Thursday, the Pacquiao versus Solis fight was brought up as a comparison. Gamboa was asked that if he stopped Solis quicker than Pacquiao did, would that be some kind of barometer comparing Gamboa with Pacquiao?

"The fight (between Solis and Pacquiao) happened awhile back and Manny is obviously a much better fighter now then he was then," Gamboa said through an interpreter. "And Solis is not the same fighter at all. If anything, I think his skill level has diminished somewhat. I don't think my fight with Solis is an indicator of anything (concerning a comparison with Pacquiao).

Gamboa is the new poster boy for Top Rank. Fast and hard-hitting, he‘s also a little unorthodox. But it's a style that has been working pretty good for him.

"When you see him fight, you see his incredible natural ability," said Top Rank President Todd

duBoef. “He has those natural gifts that aren’t seen everyday in this sport.”

Which is why Top Rank is doing whatever it can to market him. A four-time Cuban National Champ, Gamboa also has a gold medal from the 2004 Olympics safely tucked away among his title belts.

He defected from Cuba a few years ago and moved to Miami, turning pro in April 2007 and winning the title just 2 ½ years later in October 2009. He’s defended the title three times. He’ll try to do it a fourth time Saturday night against Solis.

Asked if he thought he needed a knockout against Solis to help him gain some recognition in this country - that marketability that Top Rank is looking for - Gamboa said he usually tries for a knockout, but he won’t force it. That could be foolish.

“I do push myself to try to win by knockout, “ he said. “It’s obviously something that everyone likes, and it‘s something I try to shoot for. But I’m not going to lose focus or concentration and risk losing the fight because of that.”

While Solis is getting the title shot, many fight fans are wondering when Gamboa - who has several family members still living in Cuba, including his mother - will fight a guy like Lopez, considered one of the top three or four featherweights in the world along with Gamboa and Chris John.

A fight between the two has been talked about for more than a year and Gamboa is tired of hearing about it.

“I don’t feel rushed to make that fight,” he said. “There’s been so much talk about whether or not the fight is going to happen. I just think Juan is one of the champions in our division. I could face another champion and gain just as much status. The thing that bothers me most is, they’ve created this whole expectation in the press about a fight that still hasn’t happened a whole year after they started talking about it. That’s why I’m in no rush. I’ll just continue collecting belts.”

As for Chris John, DuBoef said they’ve “reached out numerous times to see about his availability.“

Nothing yet.

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brownsugar says:

Solis is a boxer,.. jabs while retreating at the same time. and too much upperbody feinting..... Looks like a safe win for Gamboa.