

Avila, Mayweather and Ortiz Invade LA

Written by David A. Avila
Friday, 01 July 2011 11:28



Because of the unusual time for the Floyd Mayweather-Victor Ortiz public press conference, we set out on our journey in the late afternoon. The temperature in Riverside was a perfect 95 degrees.

Photographer Katherine Rodriguez was having a bit of a difficult time because of a flat tire so I killed time by making a few phone calls. A mere three minutes later Katherine zoomed by in her Lexus and I followed her to her home. Ten minutes later we were hitting the freeway toward L.A. about 62 miles to go. The Avila express was underway.

The drive usually goes fast because Katherine always has a lot of interesting things to say. But my AC is not working so I have to leave the windows down. Her hair doesn't like the hurricane forces and tangles it up for all 62 miles.

We're pretty experienced with press conferences. Whether it's in L.A., Hollywood or Beverly Hills we've got everything down to a science.

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Our target today is L.A Live a section of downtown Los Angeles that is home to Staples Center, Nokia Theater, several high-priced hotels and condos, ESPN Zone etc. The Golden Boy and Mayweather Promotions public conference will be held on the massive courtyard.

We arrived early to pick out a parking spot. One thing about the downtown area is there are no free spots to park. We hunted for a reasonable parking fee and found it a block away from LA Live. Our first job is to go grab something to eat.

El Cholos is our destination and we walk into the Mexican style restaurant eager to sit down in the patio and eat some food. I order the mandatory margarita and she orders lemonade. We're also waiting for photographer Al Applerose and Dr. Enrique Gonzalez.

I've already downed a margarita before Applerose arrives. I couldn't wait. They serve the best margaritas dollar for dollar in the world.

After stuffing ourselves we head to LA Live and see all of the people crowding around the stage outdoors. We see some web site writers, fighters and publicists as we walked toward the signing area.

The press has arrived in force. TV crews galore, newspaper columnists, web writers, web bloggers and more photographers than the eye can see have scrambled to mark their spots.

Of course the press conference didn't begin as planned. It was supposed to begin at 8 p.m. but was nearer to 9 p.m. when the fighters and promoters arrived. Giant plumed smoke rocketed in the air all along the stage.

A large 100 foot screen showed an impressive collage of previews and collection of each fighter's past. The graphics and storyline was top notch. At the end it showed Leigh Simons was the creator of the impressive graphics and previews. Man, what a way to start a press conference. The people were wowed.

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I didn't see the New York City presser so I'm not sure what happened there. But in L.A. it was clearly Victor Ortiz's town. His impressive knockdown war with formerly undefeated Andre Berto to win the WBC welterweight crown has elevated the Ventura-based prizefighter to mega hero status.

Cheers erupted when Ortiz walked the catwalk toward the main stage. Flash bulbs erupted and handshakes were given as a smiling Ortiz absorbed all of the fans cheers and back slaps. His smile was from ear to ear.

Mayweather appeared and boos rained on the undefeated fighter who's fought in many of these mega fights before. Plus, the actual fight takes place in his hometown of Las Vegas. It was a subdued Mayweather who walked toward the stage this time. Nothing like when he arrived for Ricky Hatton shouting "Fe, fi, fo, fum I smell the blood of an Englishman" years ago.

Richard Schaefer, Golden Boy CEO, said that Ortiz has the power and Mayweather the skills and experience. Then MGM Grand exec Bob Halloran wrecked the spirit of things by proclaiming Ortiz a 7 to 1 underdog. Then he kept pontificating the differences in skills and experience until Schaefer realized the fans were losing their gusto and jumped in.

"This guy here is not an underdog," said Schaefer pointing toward Ortiz.

Wise move.

Ortiz's team is led by Rolando Arellano a fiery boxing manager who broke in with former Oxnard great Fernando "El Feroz" Vargas. If you thought he talked then, he was relatively shy in those days compared to now.

With the staccato of a Southern Baptist minister the manager Arellano said "I'm unleashing a Mexican pitbull to drag him (Mayweather) all around the ring."

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Ortiz pumped up the crowd with his bravado and left with "I'll be dead before somebody takes this title. Come get it Floyd!"

Mayweather, as canny a fighter as ever there was, calmed the crowd with his soothing manner. Called Ortiz a good fighter who showed his heart and spirit. The boos still bounced through the courtyard and suddenly stopped when the multi-division champ acknowledged the passing of Genaro "Chicanito" Hernandez. The boos stopped.

The Las Vegas star talked about Hernandez being his hero and how they eventually fought. Everyone in the crowd listened intently.

Mayweather didn't boast, didn't tease and didn't clown. This was the real Mayweather and he was speaking from the heart about his role in the boxing world including leading the charge to require Olympic style blood testing for all pro sports.

Everyone in the crowd including the press was greatly satisfied with the momentous press conference. Many said it was the best they ever attended.

You can add me to that bunch.

The fight takes place on Saturday September 17 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. It will be shown on HBO pay-per-view and on theaters across the country and on close circuit screens.

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Radam G says:

Nice Reporter's Notebook. I give it a 10. Holla!

FighterforJC says:

So it begins. My only prediction is that by fight week, Ortiz would be billed as the meanest,

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greatest, strongest and most dangerous welterweight who ever lived that only Mayweather can destroy.