

New Champ Mikey Garcia's One Day in L.A.

Written by David A. Avila

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LOS ANGELES-Fresh from the cheers of victory, Mikey Garcia sat in the high-rise offices of ESPN in the middle of L.A. Live, on Monday, recounting his newest achievement, the WBO junior lightweight title capture.

"It's been the best year of my career," said Garcia.

In the plush UCLA room where photos of John Wooden, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Mike Warren adorn the walls, Garcia talked about his victory over Puerto Rico's Roman Martinez by knockout on Saturday. It's Garcia's second world title and it came in another weight division.

Though two days have passed since the title win, the former Oxnard resident, *pictured above in Rachel McCarson photo after dropping Martinez*, now living in Moreno Valley, has been unable to spend a single moment at either locale.

"I've been getting calls, e-mails, texts and all kinds of messages from people all over," said Garcia, who was dressed in a dark suit and had just finished a television shoot with the ESPN crew. "I haven't had a chance to go to my new home that I'm building in Moreno Valley, or to Oxnard. My kids are staying in Oxnard."

After losing the WBO featherweight world title on the scales, the move up a weight division to the 130-pound junior lightweights was expected to present a different challenge. Plus, Martinez had proven to be very resilient and determined in the past against foes like Diego Magdaleno and Juan Carlos Burgos.

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"We knew he was a very good fighter who was going to do everything he could to hang onto the title," said Garcia, 25. "We expected him to come forward strong."

Martinez did the unexpected and forced Garcia to make the first moves.

"I just wanted to feel what he had to offer. He threw about 30 punches before I even threw one," Garcia said. "I wanted to test my defense and see what he could do."

The second round saw Garcia looking up after getting knocked down.

"It was a good punch," said Garcia. "I went down. But it was nothing to worry about."

That proved to be the spark that lit the flame.

"We knew he could take a good punch. Then after a few rounds my brother (Robert Garcia) told me to change up a little so I began to throw right hands," Garcia said.

Around the fifth and sixth rounds it was evident that Garcia's punches were taking effect on Martinez.

"Once I saw I was hurting him I decided to step it up," he said. "I wasn't looking for the knockout, I expected it to go 12 rounds. But then I saw I could hurt him and looked for the knockout."

Right hands were connecting and despite getting knocked down in the second round, Garcia was not worried much about the return fire. A body shot to the liver ended the fight in eighth round.

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"It wasn't any different from fighting at featherweight," he said. "I felt just as strong and the punches I received were the same as at featherweight."

The new junior lightweight world champion was positive his father Eduardo Garcia was extremely pleased by the results.

"I'm sure he is very happy because I'm the first to win world titles in two weight divisions," said Garcia. His father's other champions, Robert Garcia and Fernando Vargas, were great champions but never won world titles in more than one weight division.

"I'm definitely happy," Garcia said.

Now he can finally return to one of his homes to start the celebration.

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Spinach Chin says:

Mikey Garcia is a pro's pro. Must-watch TV.