

Victor Ortiz Must Go Back and Earn His Fame the Hard Way

Written by John Nguyen
Monday, 27 January 2014 17:01



The path for crossover athletes can lead to many destinations. The most natural transitions for athletes lead to analyst spots or commentating gigs. Sometimes a trusted persona and clean reputation can produce lucrative endorsements. The rarest athletes can even turn natural charisma into a career in film or television. Think Michael Strahan and the Manning brothers. Though the roads are all a bit different for crossover athletes, there is one underlying commonality: their options and earning potential beyond sports is tied to the achievements of their athletic careers. It doesn't pay to align with mediocrity.

Winners sell.

It's a simple formula. Victor Ortiz has been an interesting exception to this rule. Despite a

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tumultuous, inconsistent, and, at times, disappointing tenure in the ring, Ortiz has still managed to parlay his career into a surprising amount of celebrity exposure. He had a stint on *Dancing with the Stars*, produced a line of grooming products with a company curiously named FaceLube, and snagged a role in the latest installment of the *Expendables* franchise.

All this for a fighter who hasn't won a fight in almost three years, was stopped in his last two ring outings, and has been part of some of the biggest in-ring meltdowns in the past decade. When Ortiz is in the ring, it is always must-see TV, even if it's for all the wrong reasons; however, those in-ring appearances have been rare as of late. In fact, when Ortiz faces off with Luis Collazo this Thursday night at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, it will be his first time competing in a boxing ring in 586 days. Still, Ortiz has somehow been able to make that layoff a productive one.

What Ortiz, 29-4-2 (22), has lacked in fistic accomplishments, he has compensated for with his unique brand of charisma. He's got a winning smile, a charm all his own, and has the swagger of someone who looks like a big deal. In a world built on appearances, qualities such as these can sometimes surpass the importance of substance, and Ortiz has taken that route relatively unabated for quite a while.

It's apparent that Victor Ortiz is enjoying the perks of semi-stardom, cashing in on big opportunities, and, to paraphrase his words, growing his empire. And why shouldn't he? He's had a fairly successful career in a brutal sport that uses and abuses fighters constantly. If he can find ways to extend that career into other money-making avenues, kudos to him. By that standard, Ortiz, and those who handle his career, have been geniuses at maximizing his financial earning power while minimizing blunt force trauma to his head.

The unfortunate truth for Ortiz is that he's completely maxed out his celebrity status, at least for now. Everybody loves a winner, and the only way to win is to take the risk of competing, a reality that Ortiz must accept. The only way he has any chance of maintaining his current lifestyle is to go back in the ring and earn it the hard way, which may be easier said than done against Luis Collazo. The choice of Collazo as Ortiz' comeback opponent raised more than a few eyebrows when the fight was announced. It would seem wiser to ease him back with a couple of soft fights as confidence builders. Not only is Ortiz coming off a long layoff, but also a stoppage loss that resulted in a severely broken jaw. Nobody would criticize his handlers for throwing him an easy out to rebuild his fighting psyche. However, Ortiz is in a legitimately competitive fight with tremendously high stakes. If he loses, any chances of big fights will immediately evaporate. He may fight on, but any hope of being a marquee name will be relegated to the realm of fantasy.

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Collazo, 34-5 (17), is certainly a live dog, in part because the blueprint for defeating Ortiz is no secret: be ready to weather a serious storm of ferocity early on, offer back some meaningful resistance, and wait for Ortiz to unravel. It worked for Maidana, Mayweather, and Lopez, and it just might work for Collazo, a fighter who has been a near-spoiler in some of his highest profile fights. Brought in to serve as a showcase opponent for Ricky Hatton and Andre Berto, both of whom were undefeated at the time, Collazo was able to provide hellish nights in the ring for both. His keys to success against Hatton and Berto could serve him well against Ortiz: hang around, stay poised, and always rally back. Luis Collazo, who is also in a desperate bid to establish credibility and relevance, is the type of wily, scrappy veteran who is capable implementing the aforementioned gameplan that has been kryptonite throughout Ortiz' career.

It's just not possible for a world-class fighter to approach boxing in half-hearted fashion; the sport is far too unforgiving for that. From the moment he completed his infamous interview after his loss to Maidana, Victor Ortiz' commitment to boxing has been questioned. His recent empire building has done little to put those questions to rest. He likes hanging out with stars, he likes making easy money, but does he like fighting? For Ortiz, the price of fame and fortune comes at an extremely high cost, one that he must be certain that he is willing to pay. Thursday's showdown with Collazo will force Ortiz to answer those questions about whether he has the stomach for fighting anymore.

Or maybe Collazo will answer those questions for him.

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Carmine Cas says:

The things that fly out of Ortiz' mouth are entertaining in their own way, he's not the sharpest tool in the shed. And Collazo is no joke either, this is going to be a tough fight for Victor unless Luis gets old over night, if he isn't already...

ultimoshogun says:

We're in for a pretty nice treat for a Thursday night. This should be highly entertaining.

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The Shadow says:

When you fight for a living, EVERYTHING is earned the hard way. Period. End of story.

No fighter out there is getting more than he deserves. There are just fighters who don't get what they should, given what they sacrifice and give to the business.

It's so easy to criticize these guys when the reality is 90% of those who criticize couldn't handle a week of their workout regimen, let alone have the balls to step into the ring.

We need to show these guys a little more respect.

the Roast says:

Collazo is really getting alot of milage out of almost beating Ricky Hatton. That has got to be five freaking years ago!

amayseng says:

Collazo is crafty, some have him beating Hatton and Berto.....

Thursday night fights, then friday night fights then saturday GGG.

looks to be a good three days....then the super bowl.

the Roast says:

Who you got in the Super Bowl A-Seng? I'm leaning toward Seattle.

Carmine Cas says:

It's tough one, I'm leaning towards Denver. So many weapons on offense.