



Former NCO Sammy Vasquez Jr. Earns Gritty Boxing Win

By Pablo Villa – NCO Journal

It was evident from Sammy Vasquez Jr.'s introduction Sunday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas that there is a special driving force behind him.

Vasquez was introduced for his welterweight boxing bout against Wale Omotoso by ring announcer Michael C. Williams, who prefaced the fighter's name with the nickname, "Sergeant."

Vasquez is a former Soldier turned fighter. He served nine years with the Army National Guard and deployed to Iraq twice. He honed his boxing craft with the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, narrowly missing the Olympics in 2012. He says he carries the lessons and hardships of his fellow Soldiers with him every time he steps in the ring. On Sunday, those lessons lifted him to a lopsided unanimous decision victory against the hard-charging Omotoso.

"Army veterans out there, and all my brothers and sisters in arms, I did this for you guys," Vasquez told CBS after the fight.

The bout was the featured undercard of a nationally televised main event featuring super lightweights Rances Barthelemy and Antonio DeMarco. With the win Vasquez keeps his undefeated record (19-0, 13 knockouts) intact along with his World Boxing Council Central American Boxing Federation, or WBC/FECARBOX title. Omotoso (25-2) suffered his second career loss.

"Wale was a tough competitor," Vasquez said. "I haven't been this beat up, yet. My objective was just to box him, move around, not let him hit me because of the power that his record showed."

Vasquez opened the fight in dominant fashion. The southpaw landed punishing body shots and great counter-overhand shots early in the match while Omotoso had trouble connecting against Vasquez's deft movement. Omotoso appeared headed for quick dismissal when his mouthpiece was knocked clean from his mouth in Round 5.

Then, Omotoso quickened the pace in Round 6, and turned the tide momentarily in Round 7 with a pair of overhand rights that stunned Vasquez and bloodied his face. In Round 8, both fighters staged a brutal showcase in the middle of the ring, trading powerful blows in a spirited rally that drew raucous cheers from the crowd on hand. But Vasquez settled down in Round 9, keeping a determined Omotoso at bay with his jab and picking his moments expertly for his combinations.

In the end, Vasquez received the same scores from all three judges — 98-93 — to improve his standing in the 147-pound division.

“I have an exciting fighting style. I like to bring it to my opponents, like I showcased tonight,” Vasquez said. “I hope that I created some more fans here that want to

follow me and be a part of the success because I’m going to keep running like a train.”

Vasquez also thanked his father, Sammy Vasquez Sr., who is in his corner during his fights and has been a lynchpin for the younger Vasquez since his days growing up in Monessen, Pa.

“It’s awesome,” Vasquez said of earning a win on Father’s Day with his dad in his corner. “My father is my backbone. He’s the one that raised me from the very beginning. For him to be here, for us to have this ride through the struggles in this game, and everything I’ve been through like my tours in Iraq, he’s always been my backbone. It’s an honor for him to be here and I’m very blessed to have the father that I do.”

Vasquez’s next fight should come later this year. ■



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