

## Great challenge awaits Gesta after impressive win in Vegas

Written by RICH MAZON  
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**Mercito “No Mercy” Gesta with father Anecito (center) and cutman Stephen Lunas after winning his bout at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas last Saturday. (Photo courtesy of Ed de la Vega, DDS)**

*Contributed to the Filipino Reporter*

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With the neon lights of Las Vegas shining on him, Mercito “No Mercy” Gesta made sure he will win in his second outing in “The Gambling Capital of the World.”

A single punch to the head in the 8th round is what it took him to put his tough foe to rest at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino last Saturday.

The Mandaue City-born boxer dropped Colombian Oscar Cuero initially in the 7th with a hard shot to the body, but Cuero got up and survived to finish that round.

Gesta worked Cuero again in the next round and mixed some head shots with it, forcing the Colombian to retreat.

A right hook from Gesta sent his opponent to the canvass for the second time in the night.

Cuero was slow to get up to his feet this time and referee Robert Byrd mercifully stopped it at the 1:38 mark of the 7th round.

This is Gesta’s 25th straight win against no loss and a single draw.

It is also the 13th knockout in his second fight in five months in Las Vegas, and his first inclusion in an HBO televised event.

His promotional company Top Rank Boxing has been slowly grooming the 24-year-old boxer for greater heights after they signed him last year.

And with Gesta’s impressive performance last Saturday, Top Rank’s CEO Bob Arum has plans already in place for the Cebuano.

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The unbeaten Gesta is being considered to fight Mexican legend and Manny Pacquiao nemesis Juan Manuel Marquez in a July 14 event planned at Cowboys Stadium in Texas by Top Rank.

“We are looking for Marquez to fight an undefeated Filipino named Mercito Gesta who is a very, very good lightweight who is moving up to 140,” said Arum on Feb. 23 here in New York when he was asked about plans for Marquez during the Pacquiao-Timothy Bradley press tour.

“The sales point is, hey, I’m getting ready for Manny Pacquiao, etc.,” he added.

Gesta, who now resides and trains in San Diego, California, was promised a slot in the July card by Arum himself after his fight last Saturday.

“He did not mention an opponent’s name but the date is July and it will be in Dallas,” Gesta said.

A member of his team informed me that they asked to fight Marquez and Arum responded, “Everyone wants a piece of Marquez. (Brandon) Rios, Gesta and (Mike) Alvarado wants it. But I can assure you that Mercito will be fighting on July 14 at Cowboys Stadium.”

Rios and Alvarado both saw action against separate opponents in the same card and venue with Gesta last Saturday and, like Gesta, both won and expressed their intentions to fight Marquez.

Marquez himself was part of the HBO pay-per-view offering, defeating Ukrainian Serhly Fedchenko in a fight held at his hometown of Mexico City. Marquez captured the World Boxing Organization’s (WBO) interim junior-welterweight title belt with a 12-round unanimous decision win against his opponent.

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The Filipino southpaw and his team are eyeing a world title belt in their next fight and, if that comes in the form of Marquez and his belt, it would be an opportunity that they would not pass on.

“I hope the next fight will be a title fight, that is our plan. I hope it happens against whoever it may be,” Gesta said.

But he admitted that the Mexican titleholder who gave Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao the hardest challenge in his career not once but thrice is whom he has his sights on.

“I have been thinking about it. I hope that the Marquez fight will happen and that they will accept the fight,” acknowledged Gesta. “That will be a big break for me, a very big break. I hope it happens.”

The boxer nicknamed “No Mercy” promised that he will be ready for Marquez and will train the hardest in his career if that fight pushes through.

“I will be ready. I need to be ready for this one,” he told me.

“I will go there, I will fight and I will do my best in the ring to win this fight,” added Gesta.

This early, the Filipino lightweight is already looking forward to resume training in two weeks time.

This week, he will be celebrating his recent victory with family and friends and relax.

But the gym will be calling Mercito Gesta soon in what will not only be the biggest break of his career but also his greatest challenge.