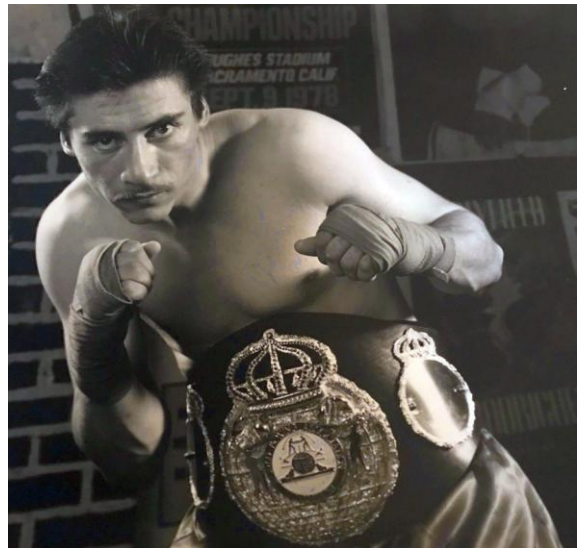


Loreto Garza: The Gentleman Boxer Who Let His Fists Do the Talking For Him

By Larry Carli

The former Super Lightweight Champion may have been over shadowed by Sacramento's three time World Champion Tony Lopez in his hometown, but people in the boxing business knew exactly how good he really was and why Lopez would never accept a fight with him.

Loreto Garza was born May 23, 1962 in Sacramento, California to Rafael and Agripina Garza. Loreto was the youngest of seven children and grew up in the lower income Northgate section of Sacramento. Loreto played baseball, basketball, and ran track while in high school. He spent many week days sparring with his older brothers in the backyard of his residence.



Loreto came from a bible based Christian family, and unlike many other professional boxers, he was not a gang member, had no trouble with the law, and did not take drugs growing up. He was not the typical at risk youth who used the sport of boxing to escape the ghetto

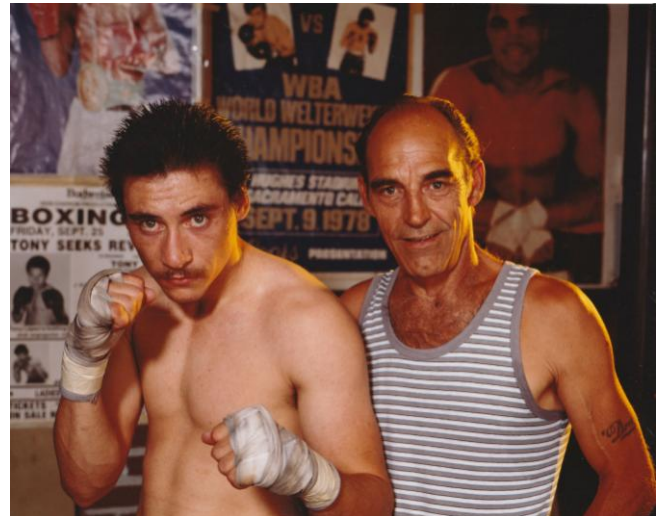
One year at the California State Fair Loreto watch the Annual Golden Bear Amateur Boxing Tournament and decided that he wanted to test his skills that he learned in backyard boxing with his brothers, against some of the state's best amateur boxers.

Upon graduation from Norte del Rio High School in North Sacramento, Loreto stopped in to the Sacramento Police Athletic League to sign up for the boxing program. All of the trainers were out of town in a boxing tournament, so Loreto's next stop was the Washington neighborhood center located in downtown Sacramento. Loreto entered the center and noticed a middle age man wearing Levis and with no shirt on. The man had a cigarette hanging out of his mouth and he introduced himself as Don Conley, the boxing trainer at the gym. Conley advised Loreto that if he wanted to learn to box, that he should show up at the gym the next day.

Loreto showed up the next day, and Conley immediately stressed the importance of defense, a good left jab, and to always think inside of the ring. Conley taught Loreto about using constant head movement to avoid punches and eventually how to throw left hooks off of his jab, and straight right hand punches. Conley saw that Loreto was a natural, and picked up things rapidly.

Loreto began fighting in amateur tournaments and won the San Francisco based Golden Gloves Championships three years in a row from 1980 to 1982 at 139 pounds. Loreto also boxed for Team USA against Venezuela once in Concord, California in 1982. Loreto ended his amateur boxing career with a record of 38 wins, and just 4 losses.

In February of 1983 at the age of 20 Loreto turned professional under the management and training of Don Conley, at approximately the same time as another young local amateur star named Tony (The Tiger) Lopez. At 5-10 ½ in height, and with a 72 inch reach, Loreto turned pro in the 140 pound super lightweight division. Loreto made his pro debut against Don Canada, a former amateur ring opponent. Loreto made quick work of Canada knocking him out in the second round with a body shot. Loreto won his first five fights by



quick knockout, and Conley was having trouble finding preliminary fighters to accept fights with Loreto. Loreto had 3 different opponents pull out of fights, until promoters found a last minute opponent for him in the form of a tough Brazilian named Francisco Thomas Da Cruz for his sixth pro fight. Da Cruz had won 8 out of 9 fights, and Loreto knew nothing about his opponent. Loreto was leading the fight on points in the 6 round fight, until he caught an overhand right hand punch in the 4th round, and was counted out. Loreto claimed after the fight that he had tired and was not prepared for Da Cruz as his first three opponents had pulled out of the fight. Loreto quickly learned that he had to stay in top shape, for all of his fights and there was no shame in losing to Da Cruz as Da Cruz would go on a four year unbeaten streak, until he was stopped by Julio Cesar Chavez in a 130 pound title defense in 1987.

Learning to stay in shape at all times between fights during his boxing career would pay Loreto dividends when it came time for his title shot later in his career. Loreto returned to the ring in March of 1984 and took a 6 round decision from undefeated Peter Cunningham. Loreto knocked out Jerry Lewis in April and Mario Castro in July. In June of 1985 Loreto stepped into the ring with a tough unbeaten brawler named Ernie Landeros from Los Angeles. Loreto was held to a draw as Landeros was effective with his body attack during the very close and competitive fight. Loreto knocked out Rene Hedman in one round in August for his last fight in 1985. Loreto took a job part time as a warehouseman for a local businessman to help him financially, while he was fighting in preliminary matches.

In February of 1986 Loreto began fighting 8 round matches, as he won a unanimous decision from Chauncey Hayes. In June Loreto knocked out Erwin Brown and Roberto Garcia in July and in September knocked out another fighter named Roberto Garcia to close out the year.

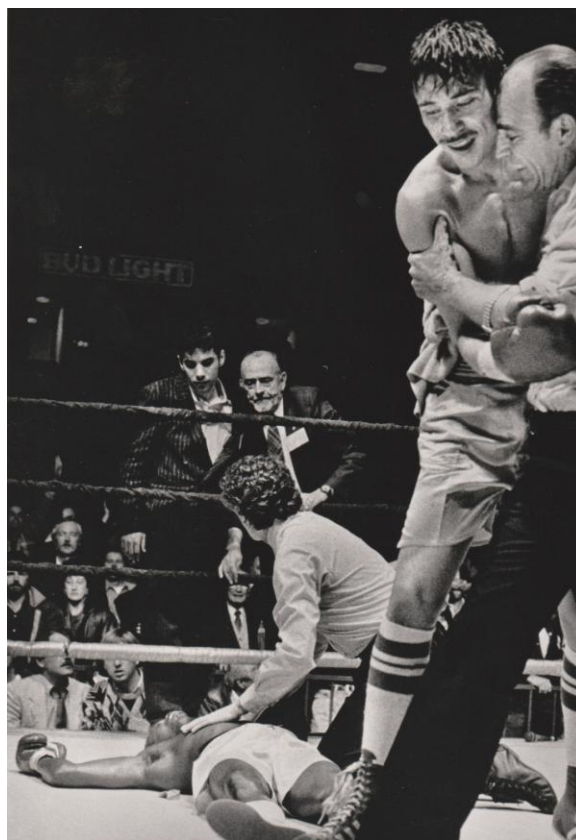
Loreto won all 5 of his fights by knockout in 1987. He knocked out Mauricio Nava in February, Willie Montana in May, Gary Williams in July, and graduated up to 10 round main event status when he knocked out Amy Pacana and Javier Juarez in September. In February of 1988 Loreto stepped up to world class opposition when he took on former World I.B.F. Lightweight Champion Charlie "Choo Choo" Brown. Loreto had little problem with the step up in class, as he stopped Brown in the 4th round with a right hand, and left hook to the head.

The victory over Brown earned Loreto a shot at the WBC Continental Americas Super Lightweight title held by Harry Arroyo in April. Arroyo was another former I.B.F. World Champion in the Super Lightweight division. Loreto stormed out of his corner in the 1st round and dropped Arroyo with a left hook to the head. Loreto dropped Arroyo three times in the first round for a T.K.O. stoppage. Loreto was becoming a big hit with the hometown Sacramento boxing fans, and he finally cracked the top ten in the Super Lightweight rankings. Loreto took some time off from boxing after the Arroyo fight to marry a pretty young Hispanic woman named Olga Izaguerre from nearby Woodland, California.

After a short honeymoon, Loreto took on Stewart Baynes in his next fight in July in Sacramento, on the undercard of the Rocky Lockridge vs. Tony Lopez title fight. Baynes did not have an overall good record, but he had won his last 3 fights in a row. Loreto remembers Baynes as the only fighter who actually ever talked to him during a fight. Loreto stated that Baynes kept challenging him to knock him out, and Loreto finally obliged when he stopped Baynes in the 9th round with a vicious flurry of punches. Loreto also cheered on as his sparring partner Tony Lopez won a unanimous decision over Lockridge to take the Super Featherweight title. Loreto and Lopez would never spar together again, after Lopez won his first world title fight.

Loreto took on his third ex-World I.B.F. Champion when he fought Joe Manley in January of 1989. Manley had also previously held the I.B.F. Super Lightweight title; Manley gave Loreto a hard fight, and stunned him in the third round with a right hand that made his whole body go numb.

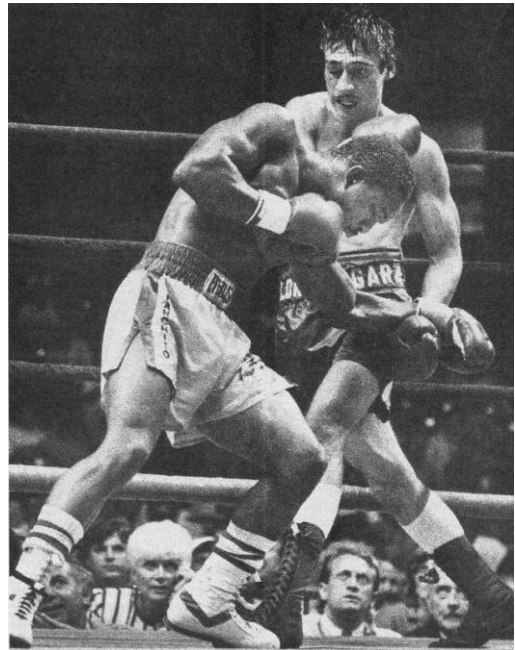
Loreto charged into Manley in the seventh round, and knocked him cold with a right hand. Manley was out on the canvas for several minutes after the fight before he was revived and able to return to his corner.



Garza Knocks out Joe Manley in the 7th round on January 25, 1989

In March Loreto took a tune-up fight with Manuel Nery, before challenging Francisco Tomas Da Cruz in a rematch. Loreto stopped Nery in the second round setting up the rematch with Da Cruz in May in Sacramento. In the rematch, Loreto totally dominated Da Cruz, and dropped him in a corner with a flurry of lefts and rights to the head before the referee stopped the fight in the 4th round. Loreto had avenged his only defeat and he was ready to challenge for the World Super Lightweight title.

Loreto took on top ranked Frankie Warren for the United States Super lightweight title in August of 1989. Warren had a record of 30 wins, with just one loss. Warren's one loss came in a previous attempt for the World Super Lightweight title. Warren entered the ring the favorite against the little known Garza and the winner was promised a shot at the World Super Lightweight title. Loreto won a unanimous decision over Warren in what could have easily been considered the fight of the year. Loreto's right eye was closed shut by a Warren left hook in the 7th round, and Warren suffered detached retinas in the fight. Warren would never fight again after this fight. Loreto described this fight as one of the toughest of his career, as Warren just kept charging at him for the whole fight. Warren was much shorter than Loreto and the two warriors exchanged vicious blows for the whole twelve round fight.

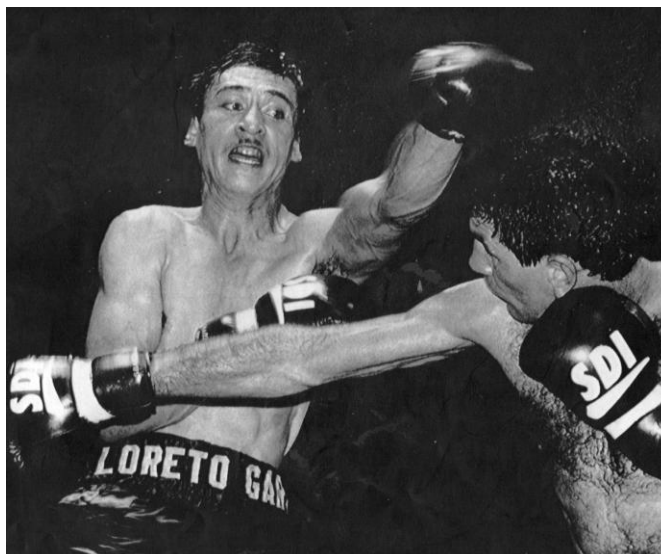


Loreto was expecting a title fight after the Warren win, but he was unable to get any of the Super Lightweight champions into the ring with him. Several attempts were made to get W.B.A. World Super Lightweight Champion Juan Martin Coggi into the ring with him, but Coggi refused to fight in Sacramento, and pulled out of a couple of scheduled fights with Loreto. In December Loreto's wife Olga gave birth to their first child, a boy named Robert. After the child's birth in February of 1990 Loreto took a fight with Rosenberg Rosas to stay in fighting shape while awaiting a title fight. Loreto knocked out Rosas in the 5th round, but his phone was still not ringing for any title fights.

Finally around the 1st of August Loreto was advised that 3 scheduled opponents for Coggi had pulled out of a title fight and he would get his chance at the title if he wished if he could fly to Nice, France for an August 17 title fight. Loreto who now always stayed in fighting shape, jumped on a plane with his manager Don Conley and flew to France for the fight on about two weeks' notice. It was ironic that 3 fighters were offered the title fight before Loreto, even though he was the number 1 ranked W.B.A. contender at the time.

Loreto arrived in Nice, France suffering from jet lag due to the 8 hour time difference, and had to train in an old makeshift gym with antiquated equipment. Promoter Don Chargin arrived in France to be present at ringside for the fight.

Loreto surprised the experts by sticking to a game plan of jabbing and counterpunching the slower moving Coggi. Loreto staggered Coggi several times during the fight, but backed off from going all out for a knockout to conserve energy during the 12 round fight. Loreto felt that he was well ahead in the fight, and mainly stuck to counter punching during the last several rounds. It took a long time to announce the decision, but when it was announced Loreto won the fight and the title by a majority decision. Two judges awarded the fight to Loreto, and the third official scored the fight as a draw. Loreto stated after the fight, that Coggi had never really hurt him during the fight, even though he could feel his punching strength. Loreto claimed he was must faster than Coggi, and he could see his punches coming at him. Loreto felt that he won at least 8 rounds in the 12 round fight. Loreto felt that the fight was scored much closer than it actually was, since Coggi was the fan favorite in France and Loreto was not expected to win this fight.



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Sacramento had its first world champion when Tony Lopez won the super Featherweight title in 1988, and when Loreto took Coggi's title, it gave the city two world champions at the same time. The local promoters did not attempt to make a match between the two champions, as there was a 10 pound weight difference between the 130 pound champion Lopez and Loreto the champion at 140 pounds. After Loreto won the title, he received a telephone call from promoter Don King, but Loreto advised King that he had no plans to leave his management or promotional team.

Loreto had developed tendonitis in his right arm, and bone chips in his elbow after the Coggi fight, but still scheduled a title defense against former lightweight Champion Vinnie Pazienza in December in Sacramento. During the fight Loreto cut up Pazienza's face and had a wide lead on points when Pazienza tried to pick him up in the 11th round and slam him to the ground. Pazienza was disqualified immediately by the referee which probably saved him from a technical knockout stoppage. After the fight, Pazienza complained to Loreto that he did not do enough talking to promote the fight. Loreto responded by telling Pazienza that he always let his fists do his talking for him.

After the Pazienza fight, Loreto had surgery to remove the bone chips from his right elbow and the tendonitis cleared up in his arm. Loreto's next big name opponent was to be three time former World Champion Edwin (El Chapo) Rosario from Puerto Rico. Loreto's second title defense was to take place in Sacramento in June of 1991.

Within the first minute of the first round, Rosario caught Loreto with a right hand to the jaw that staggered him. Rosario pursued Loreto all over the ring in the first round, knocking him down twice before Loreto was saved by the bell. Loreto returned to his corner on rubbery legs, and came out for the second round not fully recovered from the first round pounding. Loreto took a vicious beating in the second round, even though he did not hit the canvas. Loreto received more of the same punishment in the third round and was dropped two more times. The referee stopped the fight with Loreto still on the canvas from the second knockdown. Rosario had won his fourth world championship, and Loreto was now an ex-champion. It was obvious to all at ringside that Loreto never fully recovered from the hard right hand that he received in the first round. The crowd as well as Loreto was stunned by the quick ending of the fight. Loreto would say after the fight that he had a small virus, but he did not really feel that it would affect his performance that much.



Loreto took five months off from boxing after the Rosario fight to think about his future. Finally Loreto decided that he wanted a chance to regain his title, as he claimed that he had a rematch clause in the Rosario fight if he lost.

Loreto made his comeback in November with a 7th round knockout of Alberto Castro. Loreto then patiently waited for the call for a rematch with Rosario, but the call never came. Instead, Rosario lost his title to Akinobu Hiranaka in April of 1992.

In July of 1992 his wife Olga gave birth to their second child Lorraine. Married and with two children, Loreto took a job as a group supervisor for the California Youth Authority in Ione, California. Working full time, Loreto took time off to train and knock out Tony Contreras in 2 rounds in November. After the Contreras fight, Super Lightweight Champions Hiranaka, and Morris East turned down fights with Loreto.

In March of 1993 Loreto returned to the ring for the final fight of his career. Loreto knocked out Gilberto Flores in 8 rounds, and his management then asked for a fight with Tony Lopez. Lopez had won the W.B.A. Lightweight title in October of 1992, and then lost it to Dingan Thobela in May of 1993. Lopez was moving up to 140 pounds and the fight seemed like a natural for the two former world champions in Sacramento.

Promoter Don Chargin attempted to make the fight, but Lopez' manager and father, Sal Lopez Sr. turned the fight down, simply stating that he did not think it would be good for Sacramento to have two local boys fight. Perhaps Lopez senior remembered back to 1980 when his eldest son Sal Lopez Jr. lost a cross town rivalry fight with a naturally bigger Pete Ranzany. Loreto had his feelings about why the fight was never made. Loreto stated that he sparred with Tony

Lopez before he won the Super Featherweight title from Rocky Lockridge, and that he had a 4 inch height and reach advantage on him. Loreto stated that he was faster than Tony and was naturally bigger. Loreto felt that he would have defeated Tony in the ring in a competitive fight.

After avoiding a fight with Loreto, Tony Lopez would go on to knock out former champion Greg Haugen, and earn himself a fight with Julio Cesar Chavez in Mexico. Tony would be stopped by Chavez on cuts in their 1994 world title fight. Loreto received an offer to fight I.B.F. Super Lightweight Champion Charles Murray on only one weeks' notice, when he was working, and not training in the gym. Loreto turned down the offer as he was in no shape for the fight.

Loreto's third child Vincent was born in July of 1993, and he gave up professional boxing for good to concentrate on his job, and his family. In 2005 Loreto transferred to the California Department of Corrections from the California Youth Authority. Loreto became a correctional officer and among his many duties was the transportation of prisoners from one facility to another.



In 2010 Loreto and his wife Olga separated and eventually divorced after over 20 years of marriage. Loreto still works for the California department of corrections and plans to retire in approximately 3 years.

Loreto currently lives in Woodland, California and has been with his fiancé Claudia Casares for over 4 years. In 2011 Loreto was inducted into the California Sports Hall of Fame. In 2015 he was inducted into the Sacramento, California Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2017 he was inducted into the West Coast Boxing Hall of Fame. Loreto is also a proud member of his adopted hometown of Woodland's Hall of Fame.

Loreto's hobbies include traveling, boating, and hanging out with some of his old boxing friends including former champion Tony Lopez, and former featherweight contender Richard Savala. Loreto remained with his trainer and manager Don Conley throughout his whole amateur and professional ring career. Sadly Don Conley passed away from cancer in 2005.

Loreto is proud of the fact that he never received a cut in any of his professional fights. He claimed he received a scratch under one eye, and not a cut as reported after his Juan Martin Coggi fight. Loreto regrets that he was never given the opportunity to regain his title, but he blames that on the politics of boxing, and not on his manager Don Conley. He feels he is blessed that he was given one opportunity to fight for the title on short notice, and that he was able to make the best of the situation.

After retirement from the California Department of Corrections, Loreto would like to open up a small gym in his adopted hometown of Woodland. Loreto has not encouraged his sons to go into professional boxing, as he feels that it is a tough

sport, and that one must be prepared to make all the sacrifices to become nothing short of Champion of the World.

Why exactly was Loreto so under rated as a fighter by the boxing public? The biggest reason was that he was over shadowed by the emergence of Tony Lopez, as he became Sacramento's first World Champion in 1988. Lopez became a 3 time World Boxing Champion during Loreto's short W.B.A. title reign. Loreto was only given one shot at a world title, and that was only on two weeks' notice. Lopez held a championship belt off and on from 1988 to 1993 and Loreto from just 1990 to 1991. Loreto was a boxer-puncher, and even though he did not have one punch knockout power, he wore opponents down with a combination of punches, which resulted in him scoring over 80 per cent of his wins by knockout. Loreto suffered only 2 defeats in his 34 bout career. He avenged his first defeat, and was not given the chance to reverse his second defeat in the ring, even though he had a signed contract for a rematch. Loreto retired with an overall professional record of 31 wins, 2 defeats, and 1 draw, with 26 wins coming by knockout. Loreto was an excellent fighter who retired with an outstanding record. He was a fighter who made the most of a short window period to fight and win the title. He should not be judged solely on his loss to Rosario, as Rosario himself was knocked out in the first round and lost his title after his fight with Loreto. Rosario's quick loss of the title did not prevent him from being inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

It should also be noted that when Pete Ranzany received a Welterweight Title fight in 1978, that Pipino Cuevas came to Sacramento to defend his title. Rocky Lockridge came to Sacramento in 1988 to defend his Super Featherweight title against Tony Lopez and Kennedy McKinney came to Sacramento to defend his Super Bantamweight title against local contender Richard Duran in 1993. Loreto never had the luxury of a full training camp, or a hometown advantage when he challenged for the title.

In answering the question who would have won a fight between Loreto and Tony Lopez at 140 pounds in 1993, I would have to say that in a competitive fight, I believe Loreto would have won a 10 round unanimous decision because of his height, reach, and natural speed advantages. I do not think that at 140 pounds Lopez had the punch to seriously hurt Loreto. I have never heard anyone in the boxing game ever say a bad word about Loreto and he certainly was a man of integrity and honor in his chosen profession.

In summary, I would categorize Loreto as an excellent fighter who was never given the proper opportunity to prove greatness in the ring.



Loreto Garza and his fiancé Claudia Casares at his induction into the West Coast Boxing Hall of Fame in