

## Tszyu, Mitchell and a Long Lost Friend

Written by Rick Folstad

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Most great fights are like long-lost friends who suddenly show up at your doorstep unannounced. You're happy they stopped by, but you're very surprised to see them.

That's because most great fights aren't planned as much as they just happen, evolve. Styles can make a fight, but it's usually the intangibles that make it a great fight.

And that's why it's a little tough sometimes to get excited for another "fight of the year," or another "fight of the decade." You grow tired of being disappointed. It's hard to predict what a fighter is going to do when he's been knocked down twice in the tenth round and there's a bump the size of a beer can forming over his right eye.

Despite all the hype, the Bernard Hopkins - Oscar De La Hoya fight was alright, but you could find more action and drama in a Three Stooges rerun.

So why should the Nov. 6 super-lightweight title fight in Phoenix between Kostya Tszyu (30-1, 24 KOs) and Sharmba Mitchell (55-3, 31 KOs) hold more promise than, say, Danny Williams and Vitali Klitschko? Or Jameel McCline and Chris Byrd?

Maybe because Mitchell and Tszyu are not heavyweights, and maybe because we've already seen what they can do against each other, and it's not something you want grandma to see.

This fight - a rematch following their Feb. 3, 2001 fight won by Tszyu after the seventh round when a bad knee knocked Mitchell out of the fight - will be helped along by their styles. Mitchell's style is hell and high water. Tszyu is seek and destroy.

Their styles are opposites even outside the ring. Mitchell talks trash, while Tszyu likes to take the high road, relying more on quiet intimidation, though he takes his own cuts in a more subtle way.

"When I'm not around, all (Mitchell) does is talk, talk, talk," Tszyu said at a press conference on Wednesday. "He calls me a 'bum,' he calls me 'fat,' and then I sit next to him at a press conference last month and he is so quiet, I could hardly hear him, so respectful. I was the papa and he was the little boy. That's what we're going to see in this fight."

Mitchell plays the game well.

"I hope he does come to fight this time," he said. "He came to fight last time and I was still beating him with one leg. This is going to be fun. Maybe I'll just go ahead and put him in retirement."

Trash talk aside, this could be a great fight, an actual, honest-to-God fight of the year," candidate if it all plays out like it should.

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We all know about Tszyu, how he can punish a fighter before stopping him. But you've got a like a guy like Mitchell, who sat in his corner in their first fight and fought back tears when the fight was stopped because of his knee. He didn't want to quit. That's an intangible.

Let's hope our long-lost friend shows up as expected.