

More Substance than Style – Ponce De Leon

Written by Joey Knish
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He may have a *style* that defies any boxing definition of the term “style.” While he may be a southpaw, there is much more to him that is “unorthodox” than just his stance. He is neither sweet, nor scientific. He is Daniel Ponce De Leon, a rising junior featherweight, and he carries sleep drops in both hands.

Thursday night in El Paso, Texas, Golden Boy Productions continued its parade of up-and-coming fighters by showcasing Daniel Ponce De Leon as he challenged Emmanuel Lucero for the NABO Jr. Featherweight title. Suggesting that he “challenged” Lucero may not be quite accurate. He simply imposed his will and power on his foe.

In improving to 21-0 with 20 knockouts, De Leon matched the achievement of Manny Pacquiao in terms of disposing of the game Lucero inside of three rounds. What we saw was another demonstration of just how powerful the combination of raw power and speed can be inside a boxing ring.

The 24-year old, former Mexican Olympian does not bring a whole lot of traditional boxing style to the ring, but in each hand has the ability to stop a fight in an instant. Crude left crosses and rocking rights simply overwhelmed Lucero, who gave as well as he took but was simply under armed for such a war. De Leon intelligently worked the body in order to slow his foe and closed the gap in order to explode lefts and rights from various angles. If nothing else, having little style can work in his favor when the opponent does not know what is coming next. But when it arrives, it is gonna hurt.

After a typical tentative first round, De Leon picked up his work rate and by the conclusion of the second the question had been altered from “if” he would knock Lucero out to “which hand” would do the deed. Despite a tight defense Lucero simply was no match for the battering fists of his Chihuahua challenger. Looping lefts and wide rights broke down Lucero’s defenses and a left to the body finally put him on the canvas for the first time. While he beat the count, it merely led to further beating. Another left to the chin separated Lucero from his senses and the bout was stopped.

The road ahead is still being paved, as De Leon is still a bit raw to be taking on the division’s champions. That being said, youth, speed and power are great equalizers in the square ring and Daniel Ponce De Leon has each of those assets covered. WBC 122-pound champion Oscar Larios is the consensus cream of the division crop while talented Joan Guzman, Israel Vazquez and Mahyar Monshipour guard the WBO, IBF and WBA belts, respectively.

With the victory over the tried and tested Lucero, De Leon now moves from ‘pretender’ to ‘contender’ and should continue to take on better opposition each time out. However, getting big fights against the other top ranked contenders may not be as easy as it sounds as few fighters will want to risk their rankings against such a dangerous banger.

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Under the ring guidance of Clemente Medina and career planning of Joel De La Hoya and Victor Zabarza, De Leon is definitely on his way to a title shot someday soon. Once he gets there and the bell rings most of the work by his team will be done and the rest left in his hands.

And what heavy-fisted hands they are.