Written by Matthew Aguilar
Wednesday, 27 October 2004 18:00

When Kostya Tszyu and Sharmba Mitchell finally hook up to settle their differences for the undisputed junior welterweight title, it will mark the first of three intriguing, big-time rematches that will highlight boxing in November. Besides Tszyu-Mitchell - a fight that has been postponed more times than anyone cares to remember - Winky Wright and Shane Mosley will get it on again, and Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales will battle for the third and final time.

But if history has anything to do with it, all three November fights will be, well, disappointments compared to the originals. Rarely is a return fight as good as the first fight.

Here are five high-profile rematches, and how they mostly paled compared to their predecessor.

Sugar Ray Leonard KO 8 Roberto Duran, Nov. 25, 1980: The first, dubbed the "Brawl in Montreal" on June 20, 1980, was one of the best fights of that year. And it was also one of the richest non-heavyweight fights of all time. Duran was the legendary Latin lightweight champ moving up to battle America's pretty boy, Leonard. All the elements were right: Leonard was the boxer, Duran the puncher. But the bigger Leonard decided to brawl, and lost a decision - the first of his career. But the strategy switch for Leonard made the fight exciting, with several big exchanges and both fighters being repeatedly stunned. In the rematch, he boxed, using his natural gifts to frustrate Duran. Suddenly, in the 8th round, Duran quit, uttering the infamous words, "No mas". It ended a strange night in New Orleans that lacked the excitement and electricity of the first.

Sugar Ray Leonard D 12 Thomas Hearns, June 12, 1989: An exception. The first time around, Sept. 16, 1981, resulted in the legendary "Showdown", in which Leonard the boxer turned puncher and Hearns the puncher turned boxer. It ended with Leonard pounding Hearns helplessly along the ropes in the 14th round. Leonard then retired due to a detached retina, returned twice, and upset Marvin Hagler in the eight-year interim. Hearns had picked up three more world titles, but had seemingly grown old, and was a big underdog in the Las Vegas rematch. But he surprised Leonard by surviving his assaults and dropping him twice, in the second and 11th rounds. The decision was bogus, but Hearns seemed to know that he had gained his revenge. Not as good as the first, but almost.

Julio Cesar Chavez KO 8 Meldrick Taylor, Sept. 17, 1994: The original will forever live in boxing history. It was March 17, 1990, when Chavez, behind on points, knocked out the undefeated Taylor with two seconds remaining in the fight. But the controversy overshadowed the fight itself, which was one of the most brutal in 140-pound history. And while Taylor was winning, he was paying a dear price with his flesh. When Chavez connected with that final right hand, Taylor sunk sickeningly to the deck before somehow rising. Referee Richard Steele thought better of it, and stopped it. After that, Chavez continued to reign supreme before being exposed by Pernell Whitaker and Frankie Randall, and Taylor faltered - unable to exorcise the demons of that fateful night. The pair finally met more than four years later, when both had

obviously faded - Taylor much more than Chavez. Taylor started out good enough, but soon tired, and Chavez punished him to the body before knocking him out in the eighth. It was more event than fight.

Evander Holyfield DQ 3 Mike Tyson, June 28, 1997: The first fight was 1996's "Fight of the Year" and "Upset of the Year". Not only was it a magical night for Holyfield in which the "Real Deal" recaptured his youth against his longtime rival, but it was a heck of a brawl. Holyfield held a lead throughout, but Tyson was always there, threatening to end Holyfield's night with a single bomb. Holyfield flourished down the stretch, but Tyson took his beating standing up. The rematch was originally scheduled for May 3, 1997, but an injury forced it back six weeks to June 28. The crowd was electric, and it was a pay-per-view bonanza. But Tyson destroyed what was turning out to be another good one when he bit Holyfield twice on the ear, getting himself tossed by no-nonsense ref Mills Lane. Some theorize that Tyson pulled the stunt out of frustration, and it did seem that Holyfield was getting the better of him again. Whatever the case, Tyson got himself suspended and never really recovered. For that matter, neither did Holyfield. The fight itself was one of the more disappointing in recent memory.

Shane Mosley W 12 Oscar De La Hoya, Sept. 13, 2003: The first fight, fought on June 17, 2000, was a hotly-contested affair in which Mosley started out slowly before rallying to take De La Hoya, and the WBC welterweight title, down the stretch. But it was a fight in which Mosley, a natural lightweight, was desperate for the limelight that De La Hoya owned. "Sugar Shane" fought like it, and De La Hoya didn't respond like a millionaire. He fought back, and it resulted in an entertaining fight. The rematch was fought three years later, and De La Hoya was a big favorite after stopping rival Fernando Vargas. Mosley had hit hard times with back-to-back losses to Vernon Forrest. As it turned out, both fighters fought as if past their primes. It was slow and a little boring - nothing like the fierce exchanges that were featured in the original. In the end, Mosley won another decision, which was so controversial that De La Hoya himself said he'd launch an investigation. But the reality was that the controversy overshadowed the fight for a reason: It wasn't very good.