

Wright – Mosley: Repeat or Revenge?

Written by Steve Kim

Tuesday, 16 November 2004 18:00

This Saturday night at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, Winky Wright and Shane Mosley get it on again for the undisputed jr. middleweight championship of the world. It's been about eight months since they first met, but so much has changed since then. But nothing may change at all in end.

When Wright and Mosley first hooked-up, 'Sugar' Shane was basking in the glow of his second win over Oscar De La Hoya and was considered one of the world's best fighters. Wright was an unknown commodity that was avoided by the game's bigger names because of what many perceived to be his negative and difficult style. Mosley came in with the WBC and WBA belts and all the accolades. He also came into the bout listed as a 3-1 favorite.

But it was Wright who would leave the ring that night as the winner, as he decisively out-pointed Mosley by scores of 117-111 on two judges' scorecards and 116-112 on the other. But even those margins don't tell the whole story of just how one-sided this fight really was.

While Mosley boasts a bench-press of over 300 pounds, it was Wright who proved to be the stronger, bigger, more natural 154-pounder. From the very onset it was clear that Wright would have his way physically with Mosley, who began his professional career as a lightweight and has worked his way up gradually. Wright, in the eyes of many, was thought of as the proverbial stinker, but upon closer inspection he's really a technically sound guy that is willing to hang in the pocket and actually fight a little bit.

The thing is, his defense is so tight, he rarely gets hit cleanly. And with his own lack of true power, it's added up to a bevy of rather methodical, unexciting, 12 round decisions. But where the pundits made a mistake in judging Wright is this: while he isn't exciting, he's very sound and very good.

Which he proved against Mosley.

From the opening bell Wright pressed forward and easily took the best that Mosley had to offer. Mosley flashed his hand-speed often, but his punches lacked any real snap or velocity and Wright easily walked through his barrages. And while Wright was the more economical boxer, his punches were the ones having the most effect. His attacks - while not flashy - were accurate and sharp.

Not only did Wright out-box Mosley, he also out-fought him.

So now they go at it again on Saturday night, and this time around Mosley will not have his father Jack in his corner. Unlike most father-son relationships in this sport, this one was actually very fruitful. They had won titles in three weight classes and had two wins over Oscar De La Hoya to his credit.

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But like crash-test dummies, they hit the wall - hard.

Since Mosley's knockout win over Adrian Stone in the summer of 2001, he had amassed a mark of 1-3 with a no contest to his credit. During that slide he had lost twice to Vernon Forrest, butted heads with Raul Marquez early in their bout, beat De La Hoya in a rather controversial decision and then dropped his bout against Wright.

So into the breach steps the respected Joe Goossen, who seems to be pretty good at these reclamations projects. Having righted the ship of one Diego Corrales, who under his watch has gained revenge on Joel Casamayor and knocked out Acelino Freitas.

Can Goossen have the same success with Mosley? It remains to be seen, but his rematch with Wright looks an awful lot like the same situation he was in against Vernon Forrest. Forrest handily defeated Mosley in their first match-up and Mosley eschewed a tune-up fight and went directly into a rematch with Forrest, dropping another decision.

Many in the industry were surprised that Mosley exercised the rematch clause with Wright. According to some, Wright was a fight they shouldn't have taken the first time, much less facing him twice in back-to-back fights.

And like Forrest, Wright is the more natural fighter at the weight class they are boxing and in many respects the more fundamentally sound fighter, who may lack Mosley's Q-factor, but who is every bit the boxer he is - and perhaps more.

Mosley is what he is, and it was clear in the first fight that what he isn't a real, bona-fide jr. middleweight. The odds are the history will repeat itself, once again.

And unless he can totally reinvent himself to the level Madonna has throughout her career, the more things change, the more things will stay the same.