

Ivan Calderon - Boxing's Doctor of Style

Written by Joey Knish

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If "slick" is a term often used for stylish southpaws, then WBO Minimumweight Champion Ivan Calderon is the 'Doctor of Style.' The 105-pounds of commotion in motion pitched a near shutout Saturday night against Carlos Fajardo and was one step off his opponent all night long. It is something he has now done 21 times in his undefeated professional career.

When an athlete is in the zone he makes the most challenging task seem so simple and easy. A hockey goalie on top of his game will often talk about seeing the puck like it is the size of a bowling ball. In baseball batters on a hitting streak say they can see the pitch coming in slow motion.

Boxer Ivan 'Iron Boy' Calderon seems to see every punch coming and gets out of its way seconds before arrival. For his opponents, they don't see his shots coming at all - not even after they've been hit and are left swinging at the space where Calderon once was. Everything he does is on fast forward while he sees his opponents move in slow motion.

On Saturday night Calderon used his fantastic footwork, lightning quick reflexes and superior hand speed to win a unanimous 12-round decision over his Nicaraguan foe. Throughout the fight Calderon would land searing straight shots that Fajardo never saw coming, then slowed down the scene to pick up the incoming counter, pivot out of range and then advance in time to land another rapid fire laser on the button.

Fans of the sweet science had to be duly impressed with the type of deft footwork that must have all the latinas in Puerto Rico hoping for a moment on the dance floor with the mini-champ. Calderon left the ring with his title after a 120-107, 119-108 and 118-109 performance and in reality it was hard to make the case for Fajardo in any round.

The only knock anyone could make on 'El Nino de Hierro' Calderon is that he is too small. Not too small in the sense of fitting into the minimumweight division he holds his title in, but too small in that the bigger fights and better money opportunities are in divisions beyond his body.

At 29-years of age Calderon has never fought over 108-pounds. One would figure that if he were going to grow into a bigger build it would have happened already, but time will tell. However, at a mere 5 feet tall, the room to pack on extra weight may already be occupied. Marketing of the smallest licensed professional fighters is a tough task as most people savor the spectacle of bigger men hitting each other hard rather than the art of boxing.

And that too is a problem for Calderon. Let's face it, violence sells and in boxing power punching equates to violence, which equals excitement, and that leads to more money.

Ivan Calderon is a perfect 21-0-0 and arguably the biggest littlest fighter in the sport, but he has only stopped his opponent four times. That's not exactly power punching prowess. So, as the feather fisted 'Iron Boy' lets the leather fly, it sometimes takes an acquired taste for the sweet

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science to fully appreciate his skills.

This past weekend we saw some incredible flashes of brilliance packed into a 105-pound fighting frame. It was the third title defense of the year for the lefty Calderon, who certainly looks primed to unify the division's titles.

Boxing fans that appreciate fighters who show more ability than brute should catch Ivan Calderon while they can . . . his opponents haven't yet.