

Castillo-Casamayor a Fight of the Year Candidate

Written by Rick Folstad

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Maybe the best way to pick a winner in this fight is to flip a coin, draw straws or pull a name out of a hat.

On paper, this fight is closer than the Olsen Twins.

Sure, it's easy to point to Jose Luis Castillo and put your money on him. After all, he's supposed to be bigger than Joel Casamayor, and bigger guys usually win when everything else is the same. But what's a couple pounds when you're talking about ring smarts and heart and quick hands?

So Casamayor comes in at 135 instead of 130 and fights a bigger guy. Big deal. That's nothing more than an extra couple helpings of mom's famous mashed potatoes and gravy.

Besides, it doesn't appear to be worrying Casamayor. He probably walks around at 145 when he doesn't have anything coming up.

"I know my body better than anybody," he said in Spanish on a conference call Tuesday. "And going up only five pounds will not make a difference."

Castillo sure isn't using it as a tiebreaker.

"I don't think (weight) will be a factor," he also said in Spanish on the same conference call, aided by some lengthy translations. "I fought other fights heavier because I was not really training. I was just fighting to do something. This is a good weight for me."

At least that's what the translator told us they said.

Casamayor, a former WBA super featherweight champion, was asked if he moved to 135 pounds because he was struggling to make 130 pounds.

"No, at 130 pounds, no one wanted to fight me," he said, setting the record straight. "I came to this country to fight the best guys. I am a tough fighter and a warrior. I will not turn down anybody and that is the reason we are here."

He said he plans to settle in at lightweight, set up shop and stick around for a while.

"I have worked hard for this fight," he said. "I am in tremendous shape and you all must remember that speed kills."

Wonder if he really said that.

Saturday night's main event on Showtime from Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas could be a "fight of

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the year" candidate if everything plays out like it should. Both these guys are tougher to take out than an ink stain and neither one plans to go home without a big smile.

Castillo (50 6 1, 45 KOs), the WBC lightweight champion, says the key to winning this fight is to keep the pressure on and throw a lot of punches, which is what his fight plan has been for most of his life.

Casamayor (31 2, 19 KOs) boasts it will end with "a Casamayor victory, whether I have to go 12 rounds to win or through a knockout punch. Whatever happens, I will be the victor."

Barring a bad cut or a sneaky hook that somehow slips in quietly and ends everything early, this should be one of those special fights you want to record so you can watch it 30 or 40 times as you slide into old age.

Though Morales Barrera III may have taken the lead in the best fight of the year category, there's always room for another great fight. And Saturday night everything seems to be in place for a five minute standing ovation after the final bell.

Or sooner.