

Diego Corrales and Mark Johnson - Not Gone, Not Forgotten

Written by Joey Knish
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Saturday night, at Foxwoods Resort Casino, Diego Corrales and Mark Johnson showed they plan on staying around the top of the fight game. Corrales faced a defining moment in his career that would either see him fall into the rankings as a contender or rise to the level of champions. On the other hand, Johnson was continuing to rebuild his spot as one of the lower divisions' best and was hoping to erase the memories of two losses at Bantamweight, which had many questioning whether Johnson was a shot fighter.

Diego "Chico" Corrales need to take the step up and prove he was one of the sport's best, as opposed to one of those guys who could come close but not close the show. This was a fight that could make or break Corrales, who had struggled mightily the first time on the big stage when Floyd Mayweather stood in the opposing corner. Of course, after his first fight with Joel Casamayor was cut short due to a weak defense, suspect chin and hand cut mouth piece, Corrales had even more to prove. And he did. Best known for his heavy hands and explosive finishes it was time for "Chico" to take on a world-class opponent and prove he was more than a one-trick knockout pony. What he proved this past Saturday was that he could do a lot more than knock out over-matched opponents . . . he could box a little too.

Working behind a solid jab from the get go, Corrales built a lead on all scorecards and stuck to his plan like never before. New trainer Joe Goosen must have taken Corrales back to school as the Sacramento native looked near unbeatable for much of the night. The jab - as it always is - was the key that unlocked his true potential. At a towering 6-feet tall, a focused Diego Corrales is the type of boxer who can make for a lot of trouble at the top of any division from 130 to 140 pounds.

Problems in the past, aside from those outside the ring, have meant that Corrales has often been looking for the knockout from the moment he steps through the ropes. His head movement has been poor, and his chin tested and failed. Still, he has never been seriously hurt by anyone other than Mayweather and despite being knocked down has always come back strong with the heart of a champion. Add some defense and the work off the jab that we saw on Saturday and we should expect many great things from Chico.

Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson was too sharp, too skilled, and too strong for Colombian Luis Bolano. While Bolano came into this bout undefeated in 38 fights, he clearly had never been in the ring with anyone close to the caliber of Johnson. A 38-0-0 record with 28 whacks is only as good as the level of competitions it was achieved against, and Bolano ran that record up almost exclusively in his native Colombia versus lower level fighters. That being the case, it was no surprise to see Johnson work Bolano up-and-down, head-and-body, dropping him twice before a merciful end to the bout was called.

It was vintage "Too Sharp" taking an opponent apart with speed and power, something that had been missing when he lost twice to Raul Marquez at 118-pounds. In the second of those two fights many had written Johnson off. He looked slow, confused, and got hit more than

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ever before. Now, back down to his championship weight of 115, Johnson again looks "Too Sharp" for the rest of his division.

By the end of the night, two fighters who had faced adversity in the past had battled through their past failures and proven themselves true champions. It was nice to see.