This Saturday night in Las Vegas Oscar De La Hoya gets his shot at redemption against Shane Mosley, who defeated 'the Golden Boy' in June of 2000. In that time Oscar, who took a bit of a hiatus from boxing after suffering two losses in three fights in that period, has rehabilitated his status as one of the games best fighters. Mosley, after failing to capitalize on his victory is currently on a three fight non-winning streak.

Mosley is thought to be 'gun shy' and unsure of himself after his successive losses to Vernon Forrest. De La Hoya, armed with a new trainer in Floyd Mayweather Sr. has adjusted to a 'new' style of boxing and last year vanquished his arch nemesis Fernando Vargas in dramatic style.

De La Hoya is thought to be ascending, Mosley, on a steep decline. And you know what? I'm still picking Mosley to win in another closely contested fight.

Why, you ask? Well, just like Ken Norton always gave Muhammad Ali fits, Iran Barkley had Thomas Hearns number, Ricardo Mayorga haunts Vernon Forrest, Bill Russell always seemed to find a way against Wilt Chamberlain, how the Minnesota Vikings would always ruin the post-season of the Los Angeles Rams and how Bob Stoops regularly out-coaches Mack Brown, 'Sugar' Shane is simply too sweet for Oscar.

The bottom line is very simple, Mosley's hand-speed, quickness and athletic ability will always trouble De La Hoya, who's not exactly a turtle himself in the speed department. And yes, I realize that Mosley is considered the smaller fighter once again in the rematch- just like he was in the first encounter when he was moving up from lightweight to take on De La Hoya at welterweight. This time De La Hoya comes in as the unified jr. middleweight titlist(with both the WBC and WBA titles) but lets be real, he could probably make 147 if he really wanted to. Hey, let's face it, Mosley will always be shorter than Oscar and will always be at some kind of size advantage. This is nothing new.

No Mosley did not look spectacular in any of his two losses to Forrest or particularly impressive in his last bout against Raul Marquez in February- but who's idea was it to take on a southpaw in what was supposed to be a showcase fight, anyway?- but has De La Hoya really done THAT much since his loss three years ago.

Think about it, he beat a blown-up Arturo Gatti, an ordinary Javier Castillejo and then a Fernando Vargas last September that many considered to be damaged goods, thanks to the powerful hands of Felix Trinidad. And in his last bout he engaged in a highly lucrative sparring session against the faded Yory Boy Campas.

Now, do any of these plodders have the speed and explosion of Mosley? Fugheddaboutit. That's like comparing a cable modem or DSL to a dial-up connection. And let's not forget that Vargas was virtually even up with De La Hoya before he landed that big left hook at the end of the 10th round that basically ended things. I don't care what mental state Mosley is in, Mosley-

even at 154 pounds- is a much better athlete than Vargas and doesn't come in with an anger that is detrimental to himself against Oscar.

And what about the teachings of Mayweather and how they might effect this fight? I don't think there's any doubt that Mayweather has made a positive difference for De La Hoya in the corner but the bottom line is that in the heat of battle, boxers, like anybody else will revert to what they do best. But if Oscar is insistent on sticking with what has been taught to him the last few years, it could be even more detrimental. The bottom line is this, this style still isn't natural to him and if he has to think about doing certain things, against a fighter with the quickness of Mosley, he'll lose every exchange with him.

It says here that if Mosley reverts back to his form- which is being a busy fighter, who works the body and tries to throw sharp combinations- he wins this fight. Somewhere along the way, when he was blowing out over-matched foes like Antonio Diaz, Shannon Taylor and Adrian Stone, he began to rely more and more on his right hand. The truth of the matter is that he got away from what he was best at, he was more Meldrick Taylor than Thomas Hearns. Against De La Hoya he is at a strength deficit, but he has the advantage in speed. Just rewatch the 12th and final round of their first fight, Mosley would hit De La Hoya with a tidal wave of punches from all angles that had Oscar looking like a man drowning in the torrent.

Those who point to a De La Hoya victory believe that he is in the better state of mind while Mosley comes in with doubt. But just remember this, it was Mosley who basically swept the last six rounds of their fight and when it comes to their individual match-up, it's Oscar who comes in with doubt.

It was just a few years ago that Mosley was being mentioned in the same breath as other past 'Sugar's' like Robinson and Leonard. Now, after his recent slump, it seems like he's being lumped in with the likes of Ray Seales. Obviously, both were an over-reaction and exaggeration in both cases. As usual, the truth is probably somewhere in between but I think it's closer to the latter than the former. Mosley is the real thing, always has been, always will be.

I think he proves it again on Saturday night.