

## Weighty Issues for Oscar De La Hoya

Written by Joey Knish

Wednesday, 15 September 2004 18:00

---

On September 18th, Oscar De La Hoya will be taking on the most dangerous fighter he has ever come across. The Golden Boy will be challenging an opponent known for using any and all tactics required to win a fight, and a man who is naturally much bigger than he. Comparing the skills and accomplishments of Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya reveals a close fight, but for Oscar the issues are much more weighty.

The Golden Boy now has a grand total of 1 middleweight fight under his belt, a fight in which he struggled versus an opponent he clearly underestimated and was all wrong for him in the first place. Felix Sturm was a crafty unknown southpaw with little power but fast hands, all packed into a comfortable 160-pound frame.

Prior to his debut at middleweight, Oscar had fought four times at the junior middleweight limit. In his fights against Javier Castillejo, Fernando Vargas, Yory Boy Campas and Shane Mosley at 154 pounds, the one consistent theme was that he didn't have the power he carried at welterweight. While part of that was due to the fact that he was facing bigger opponents, the flip side was that he was naturally not that big of a fighter and therefore didn't bring his power up with him.

Now De La Hoya takes on his biggest challenge yet, against his biggest opponent yet, and at the heaviest weight class he has ever been in. Contrary to The Golden Boy, Bernard Hopkins has been campaigning at the 160-pound limit for nearly his entire 48-fight career. Naturally The Executioner is a middleweight fighter.

A point that is often missed by a few - but proven by the albatross Wladimir Klitschko wears around his neck - is that the bigger you are, the more weight you have to carry around the ring with you, and therefore the better condition you must be in. The relevance of this is that a smaller fighter putting himself into a higher division may have to pump himself up to make the weight and then find himself sluggish as the fight wears on into the championship rounds. Traveling a long distance in the heat with the wife at your side and four kids packed in the back seat of the station wagon with all the vacation luggage at back can take its toll on the engine of your vehicle. In his only fight carrying 160 pounds around the ring, Oscar De La Hoya's motor was overheating and he was running out of gas just as his journey ended.

It seems to be the logical approach to say that for De La Hoya to have a shot at victory this weekend he will have to box, box, box like never before. Oscar will need to be on his toes and moving in order to negate the stalking nature of The Executioner. Hopkins has a style that renders opponents jabs useless, so the best Oscar can hope for is to pot-shot his way to a points decision. For Oscar to meet Bernard in the middle of the ring and stand flat-footed trading shots would be a mistake. Surely both men know this.

While Oscar's only chance is to box and move, it still may not be enough. Hopkins is a methodical fighter who puts pressure on his opponents and gradually imposes his will upon

## Weighty Issues for Oscar De La Hoya

Written by Joey Knish

Wednesday, 15 September 2004 18:00

---

them. Unless Oscar gets caught in the headlights of an oncoming Executioner, Bernard will be stalking and systematically closing the gap between the two until they inevitably engage one another.

Those who suggest that Hopkins may be taking The Golden Boy a bit lighter based on how Oscar looked against Sturm can toss that notion in the ocean. Bernard is such an intelligent fighter he recognizes that he will see a better conditioned De La Hoya on fight night. Hopkins also has been a bit of a paranoid sort and simply won't let down his guard.

The MGM Grand in Las Vegas is set to stage this mega-fight for all the middleweight boxing marbles as the WBA, WBC, WBO and IBF titles are all up for grabs. It takes a big man to support the weight of four world title belts.

Saturday we will find out if Oscar De La Hoya is that man.