

De La Hoya–Hopkins Fight Predictions

Written by Chris Gielty

Thursday, 16 September 2004 18:00

Boxing fans—and most everybody inside the boxing industry—are now counting down the days to Sep. 18, when Oscar De La Hoya finally meets Bernard Hopkins. We have asked the boxing writers at **TheSweetScience.com** to weigh in with their predictions as to what is going to happen when the ‘Golden Boy’ finally meets the ‘Executioner’ in the middle of the ring on Saturday night.

Tim Graham

Bernard Hopkins by unanimous decision. Oscar De La Hoya proved in his last bout he doesn't have what it takes at this weight. Once De La Hoya realizes he can't win this fight, he has enough boxing skills to elude Hopkins and last until the final bell. That's the only reason I'm not picking Hopkins via TKO.

Bernard Hopkins by unanimous decision

George Kimball

Hopkins turns into The Picture of Dorian Gray before our eyes.

De La Hoya by Decision

Rick Folstad

De La Hoya moved up one weight class too many when he went up to middleweight. Hopkins is comfortable there and he's taken shots from some of the hardest hitting middleweights of his era, starting with Antwun Echols. De La Hoya won't be able to keep him away, much less hurt him. This could be the Golden Boy's last fight.

Hopkins by Decision

David Mayo

This is the Leonard-Hagler of our generation, right? Leonard couldn't win by dancing, with Hagler stalking and winning rounds while walking him down. Leonard couldn't slug and win because Hagler would knock him out. Hagler had shown little sign of aging.

Then Leonard danced and slugged and won, and Hagler got old.

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No, this isn't the Leonard-Hagler of our generation. It's an established, career-long middleweight, and dominant champion, fighting an opponent with a long history of facing lighter opponents coming up in weight. When De La Hoya moved up against naturally heavier opponents, he ended up in tougher fights than expected against natural junior middleweight, Javier Castillejo and natural middleweight, Felix Sturm. And now he thinks he can beat Bernard Hopkins? Not unless Hopkins gets old like Hagler did in 1987.

The only question is whether De La Hoya shows the courage Felix Trinidad did in trying to win in that final fateful round against Hopkins, when Trinidad went out on his shield. De La Hoya will go out upright, but a solid loser.

Hopkins by decision

Steve Kim

I like Hopkins by decision, but it's not as easy as some think. I think Oscar boxes well early, utilizing his speed and quickness. But alas, he does his usual second half fade and Hopkins takes over late.

Hopkins by Decision

Jonathan Rendall

The fight this most resembles is Hagler versus Duran. An outstanding champion against a garlanded boxer from much lighter weights. The difference is Hopkins will not be as respectful as Hagler, who fought with unusual caution that night. Neither do I believe Del La Hoya is intimidated by Hopkins, as some say. He didn't have to take this fight. Complacency or cuts seem the only way Hopkins can lose. De La Hoya is just too small and Hopkins too strong and cunning. I can even see him boxing De La Hoya to bring him closer. When that happens the Golden Boy will realize he was brave but deluded.

Hopkins by TKO in late rounds

Randy Gordon

Every time I find reasons why Oscar de la Hoya will beat Bernard Hopkins, I think back to a couple of dates between some bona fide middleweights and outstanding--even great--welterweights. The first date is December 20, 1963. The other date is February 9, 1974. The first matched Rubin "Hurricane" Carter against welterweight king Emile Griffith.

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The other date matched middleweight king Carlos Monzon against welterweight champ Jose Napoles. Carter blew Griffith away in the first round. Monzon did likewise in an easy fight against "Mantequilla," stopping him in round seven. I've got to figure that Griffith and Napoles were better than De La Hoya, while Monzon, if not Carter, was at least as good as Hopkins. I just feel that no matter what Oscar can do, Bernard can do better. I also don't like de la Hoya's track record of fading late in the fight, no matter what his excuses are. Hopkins doesn't fade. Oscar does. I also feel Hopkins can take de la Hoya's best shots. I don't believe, over 12 rounds, Oscar can do the same with Hopkins' best. Only Oscar's fighting spirit will keep him around for the final bell.

Hopkins by unanimous decision

Jim Brady

Bernard Hopkins may be pushing 40, but I still think he's too big and strong for Oscar De La Hoya and expect him to give Oscar a bad beating. I'm predicting a 10th round TKO. Early in his career De La Hoya always had a tremendous advantage on the way up because of his height, but he's not fighting Jimmy Bredahl here. How's he going to keep Hopkins off? De La Hoya had a hard time with Ike Quartey back in 1999 at welter, and he had style similar to Hopkins, only he's much smaller. De La Hoya only beat him on a very questionable split decision.

Oscar is 31 now, and his two losses to Shane Mosely took a lot out of him. Hopkins isn't the most stylish fighter in the world, but he survived an absolute war with Atwun Echols and kept slugging back. De La Hoya might outbox Bernard for a few rounds, but what happens once he slows down? De La Hoya's got to be admired for his courage and his penchant for taking risks, but Felix Sturm proved in his last fight that Oscar's become alarmingly easy to hit. Sure, De La Hoya didn't train as rigorously as he should have, but Oscar's reflexes aren't what they were and the limited Sturm kept nailing him flush. Styles make fights, but Hopkins destroyed Felix Trinidad, while Oscar blew his match with Trinidad because he ran the last few rounds.

Oscar can run from Hopkins, but he can't hide. I think Bernard will batter De La Hoya into retirement, but great as it is for him, it's a disaster for boxing. Oscar is the second biggest draw in a sport that's desperately starved for fans.

Hopkins wins

Joey Knish

The time tested wisdom that a good big guy beats a good little guy holds true here, and Hopkins is better than "good." Oscar hasn't shown any type of power since 147 and he looks to be slowing down bit by bit. The talk that he is in better shape has been heard before and I expect this to be his downfall again. Look for an even fight for 5-6 rounds before Bernard executes his

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will upon the Golden Boy to take a unanimous decision.

Hopkins by Unanimous Decision

Deon Potgieter

If the conventional De La Hoya shows up he will stick and move using his speed to outrun the older Hopkins and score points with fast jabs. This will work for the first few rounds, but Hopkins will gradually reel him in and force some heavy exchanges. While De La Hoya will be ahead on all the scorecards, I see Hopkins stopping him in latter part of the fight (round 11). If De La Hoya feels adventurous and goes for the kill from the opening bell, he could catch Hopkins unawares and secure a surprise KO. This would have to happen in first 3 rounds, if it doesn't, Hopkins will finish him off.

Hopkins by Stoppage (11)

Mike Indri

While I honestly thought that Oscar would never go thru with this, I now feel that the time is right. Since Bernard's resounding victory over Trinidad he really hasn't shown too much and, maybe I'm giving De La Hoya too much credit, but I see Oscar surprising most of the boxing world with a big win... ala Sugar Ray over Hagler

De La Hoya by decision

Sam Gregory

First and probably foremost in his mind, Oscar feels the need to overcome his embarrassing performance in the Felix Strum fight. De La Hoya was fat and overconfident trying to prove he could stand and trade punches with a 160 pound fighter. If you've ever seen him fight at any weight you know De La Hoya's game plan has never been to go right at a fighter and try to take him out the way he did against Strum. Oscar has been fighting too long to make that mistake with Hopkins. De La Hoya is faster on his feet than Hopkins and it's never been Bernard's game plan to brawl with an opponent.

Yeah, Hopkins is a much harder puncher, but, again, it's always been Hopkins game plan to be patient and pick guys apart a little at a time. Since he won the IBF belt in 95', all but two of his knockouts came in the later rounds of the fight. That means Oscar doesn't need to feel intimidated by Hopkins size and power, he just needs to be the technician of a fighter that beat Javier Castillejo, Ike Quartey and Pernell Whitaker and win rounds.

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Last of all, De La Hoya's quality of opposition has always been better. Even though he lost some close fights, Oscar does have the experience; if he uses it to his advantage he could pull this off by a close, or split decision.

Oscar De La Hoya by decision

Matt Aguilar

Whether he's looked it recently or not, Hopkins is 40 years old and not used to using his legs. The fresher, younger De La Hoya is too smart to go toe-to-toe with him, so he'll surely use lateral movement, quick combinations and bursts of energy to make Hopkins look slow and steal rounds. Speed bothers Hopkins just as it bothered Marvin Hagler in his 1987 fight with Sugar Ray Leonard, and, like Hagler, most of Hopkins' title challengers have come right at him. The question is whether or not De La Hoya can keep it up for 12 rounds. About the 9th, De La Hoya will start to tire, and Hopkins will come on strong to take the last few rounds. But De La Hoya will tie up Hopkins down the stretch and hear the final bell. Surprise! It's 1987 again. De La Hoya wins a split decision. And Hopkins, like Hagler, goes home grumpy.

De La Hoya by Split Decision

David Payne

This is a fascinating fight, and despite the pitiful performance served up by Oscar in his last bout, I do feel this fight could be more competitive than many believe. In fact, the Sturm performance could prove to have been a vital catalyst in ensuring Oscar realised the enormity of the challenge he faced and forcing him to prepare thoroughly.

Of course, much is being made of the size advantages Hopkins will have and the speed advantage Oscar will hold. Personally, I think once these two guys square off at centre ring, the size difference may not be as large as people think, in much the way it didn't when Ali met Liston the first time, but neither do I feel Oscar will enjoy that large an advantage in hand-speed.

It strikes me that Oscar decision to come in almost on the Light-Middleweight limit is a good one as it will maintain any hand-speed advantage he does have and Hopkins doesn't tend to pile on the weight following the weigh in as some middleweights do. So by staying light Oscar doesn't sacrifice too much.

The problem Oscar will have is doing enough to win rounds, I just cannot see a scenario where Hopkins doesn't match him punch for punch and Oscar is unlikely to try and dance his way to victory - he may be skilled but he's not SRL, too much Mexican in his blood. Whilst the Hagler v SRL analogy is a good one at first glance, closer scrutiny makes the comparison a little shallow and Hopkins wont be 'giving' Oscar the first four rounds either.

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And if Vargas can get Oscar to the ropes, Hopkins sure will. I don't see Hopkins keeping Oscar down though, he's not a concussive, light-switch puncher. This is a distance fight, no question.

But whilst Hopkins may not be a knockout puncher himself, he's gonna be smiling at any success Oscar has...Hopkins chin is stellar and he's too cute to be caught out by punches. He'll see every one of them coming.

I'd say Hopkins grows into the fight, which may well be level after four or five rounds, and then slowly has more success as Oscar moves less and stays in range. Hopkins then slowly begins to break up his opponent putting rounds in the bag. Whether we reach a points decision will depend on Oscar, if he tries to rally in the championship rounds and press the action - Hopkins could well bust him up and stop a tiring DLH. Because DLH is rarely more effective in the second half of the fight.

However, the scenario I see playing out is Hopkins winning on points, with perhaps a late knockdown to make it clear. And Oscar maintaining enough reputation by lasting the distance fairly competitively to make any future Tito bout at middleweight marketable.

Hopkins UD12

Chris Gielty

When this bout was announced there was a collective gasp heard amongst boxing fans. Like leading a lamb to the slaughter ... the Oscar De La Hoya who faced Felix Sturm would be no more than cannon fodder for Bernard Hopkins. Now, as we count down the days to Sep. 18, a perceptible shift in opinion emerges, as De La Hoya's stock continues to rise as the fight draws nearer. And so it should. This is a winnable fight for the Golden Boy.

□ *You already know it, but one more time together: "styles make fights." □ Bernard Hopkins has never been a true pressure fighter. And if there is one element lacking in Hopkins' arsenal, it is speed. Think about it long enough, about the stylistic matchup, and the door opens for De La Hoya. If Oscar can mix boxing with speed and movement over 12 rounds, a surprise may be on the cards—literally.*

But, note the "12 rounds" bit. De La Hoya's stamina has long been suspect. He wasn't in shape for Sturm—no—and he will be ready for Hopkins—yes. But at the elite level, superior conditioning is a function of both genetics and consistent dedication over a long period of time. Oscar has been training hard for a number of months now and looks to be in great shape, but it's Bernard Hopkins he's facing. Did you see Hopkins after he had just gone 12 rounds with Robert Allen? He wasn't even blowing. Hopkins looked like he could have gone another 12 rounds without any trouble.

Despite the stylistic nuances, this fight comes down to a few simple facts. Oscar is in against a bigger man, a bigger man with superior stamina, an iron will and a chip on his shoulder which

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seems to provide boundless motivation. And Hopkins is a well-schooled technician in the ring.

There are plausible scenarios via which De La Hoya could win, but his best bet is that Hopkins does indeed get old all in one night. It's not something I'd bet on.

Hopkins by Decision

Frank Lotierzo

When Hopkins-De La Hoya was announced, I said I wouldn't get caught up in the De La Hoya sentiment I knew would catch-fire the week of the fight. It's almost as if a Hopkins win is an upset? When this fight was being talked about, my feeling was Hopkins would win. Now De La Hoya is the chic pick of many writers and fans. Other than hearing everyone trying to justify picking De La Hoya, nothing has changed. Oscar has had life and death versus the best opponents he has faced. I'll stay with my first instinct, Hopkins. My chic pick was Leonard over Hagler. I absolutely loved Leonard in that fight. I'm going to fight the masses and go with what I felt from the onset, Hopkins will beat De La Hoya. However, I don't like him as much as I did Leonard.

Hopkins will win