

## Heavy Hands at Lightweight - Diego Corrales vs. Jose Luis Castillo

Written by Joey Knish

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One of the more intriguing fights of the year is set for March 5th at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, Nevada. WBO Lightweight Champion Diego Corrales challenges WBC ruler Jose Luis Castillo.

A recent trend with the best fighters fighting the best continues with this bout. It started last year and concluded with Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson deciding Light Heavyweight supremacy. This year the Welterweight division will go to the winner of the rematch between Cory Spinks and Zab Judah, with Antonio Margarito in line. Ricky Hatton will try to take the 140-pound crown from Kostya Tszyu, and Cruisers Jean Marc Mormeck and Wayne Braithwaite will decide sub-200 supremacy as the fashion gains momentum.

Great expectations come when great fighters meet and the Castillo-Corrales fits that bill as both men look to cement their reputation as the best in their class. What better way to settle the debate?

It is tough to find two men below the heavyweight limit that possess as much power as these two fighters and to have them in the ring at the same time is a recipe for a fantastic fight. 'Chico' Corrales has won 32 of 39 fights by knockout while Castillo has terminated things early an amazing 45 times in 51 victories.

As if the plot could thicken any further, Castillo has four TKO losses in his career and Corrales has been stopped in both of his defeats. Two heavy-handed bangers facing an opponent who has also been stopped has fight fans anxious for this bout.

Oh yeah, and each can box more than a little too.

With all due respect to Acelino Freitas, Julio Diaz, Juan Diaz and Joel Casamayor - an argument suggesting than anyone other than Corrales or Castillo is the best lightweight in the world could only come from someone who hasn't seen them fight.

The result of this bout may come down to who can take the other's power shots best. Both fighters have used a box-and-stalk style of working the body to slow down opponents in order to find range on their power shots and exhaust their opponents' will to survive. Both have typically had to come after the other fighter and wear them down. Both have shown stunning finishing power once they do. Both have been on the receiving end and have been stopped. But only one man can win.

For the first time in his career, the 27-year old Corrales will be facing an opponent equal in height and of equal or greater physical stature. At 5'11" he has always been the freak in the 130-135 pound divisions as he defied logics of human biology by being so tall yet so light. The basics of this bout are a bit different as Corrales has spent his career punching down at opponents rather than straight at them. In recent wins over Acelino Freitas and Joel

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Casamayor, 'Chico' displayed boxing skills long thought missing as new trainer Joe Goosen has dusted off his jab and brought it back into the mix.

The 31-year old Castillo stands 5' 9" and will squeeze himself down to the Lightweight division he reclaimed with a victory over Juan Lazcano and defended with a win over Casamayor. Many feel that Castillo beat Floyd Mayweather Jr., the fighter most feel is the pound-for-pound best in the world, when the two met for the second time in 2002. Count Diego Corrales as one of those who is convinced Castillo won that fight too.

The deceiving number on the resume of Jose Luis Castillo is the losses and how they came about. After turning professional at the tender age of 17, he suffered his first loss by TKO to seasoned former featherweight champion Cesar Soto while just 20 years of age. The following year he also lost by TKO, this time to Javier Jaregui who recently held the IBF Lightweight belt. A cut stopped his bout with Julio Alvarez and then came the decision losses to Floyd Mayweather Jr. All of his TKO losses have come due to Castillo being cut, and he has never been knocked down in 58 fights.

2004 was quite a year for both men as Jose Luis Castillo won the vacant WBC Lightweight title over Juan Lazcano and then successfully defended that belt against Joel Casamayor. Diego Corrales claimed the WBO Super Featherweight title over Casamayor and then stepped up to Lightweight to win the WBO version of that championship. Both the WBC trinket held by Castillo and the WBO belt brought by Corrales will be up for grabs when the two clash in March.

The Castillo-Corrales winner will have proven himself to be the best by fighting the best and with all that firepower in the ring at once, the ending could be explosive.