

## Shane Mosley Home at Welterweight

Written by Rick Folstad

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It's a long, lonely trip back to the top, though a win on Feb. 25 against "Ferocious" Fernando Vargas could shorten the journey to a light stroll for "Sugar" Shane Mosley.

After a blistering start that saw him win his first 38 fights – 35 by knockout – he suddenly fell to earth when he lost to Vernon Forrest in July 2001.

But that was only a quirk, a rarity, a bad night for a guy always seemed to have good ones.

No one's perfect.

But then he lost to Forrest in the rematch, and they took away his mask and cape and called him a mere mortal.

But then he beat Oscar De La Hoya for a second time and his past sins were quickly forgiven.

For awhile.

Cue the heartbreaker.

Winky Wright then handed Mosley back-to-back losses in 2004, and the Sugarman was suddenly just another fallen fighter.

Following wins last year against David Estrada and Jose Luis Cruz, Mosley is 3-4 with a no contest in his last eight fights. And no knockouts.

He won't get a bowl bid with those numbers.

Which is why this is such a big fight for Mosley (41-4, 35 KOs). He beats Vargas (26-2, 22 KOs) in their WBA junior-middleweight title eliminator at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, and they'll start mentioning his name again around the dinner table.

"This fight is very special to me because I want to bring back the old style of the way I have been fighting in the past," Mosley said on a recent conference call.

Unfortunately, he'll need to drop back down to welterweight for that to happen. And Mosley knows it. He doesn't belong at 154 pounds, though he's moving up there to fight Vargas.

"Welterweight is my home," said Mosley, who hasn't been in his house since his second fight with Forrest. "If I had to make welterweight for this fight, I would be able to do it. I will be at welterweight for the remainder of my career, but there will be fights at 154, challenges that I will take. I think welterweight is where I will stay."

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Which is it? Will he stay at 147 or venture up to 154 again?

Against Vargas, Mosley said he's ready for anything that gets thrown at him.

"Vargas has tried to pressure everyone he has fought, but I will not be surprised if he throws in a little boxing here and there," Mosley said. "Danny Smith (Vargas' trainer) is more of a boxing trainer. He is not one to teach you to come at the fighter."

Mosley said if Vargas continues to preach that he's is going to chase him, it makes him wonder if Vargas is really going to come after him or if he's just setting a trap.

"If he's going to box me, then I'll be ready to attack," he said. "If he's going to come after me, then I'll be ready to fight."

There was also talk that Vargas is looking past Mosley at Oscar De La Hoya, the only active fighter out there who has beaten him.

"That would be a big mistake," Mosley said. Besides, De La Hoya – who is involved in promoting the Feb. 25 fight and who stopped Vargas in September 2002 – said he isn't interested in a rematch with Vargas.

"That fight will never, ever happen," he said. "Fernando Vargas has his hands full with [Mosley] and my advice would be, do not look past this fight because it's just not going to happen."

At least not right away.