

Sugar Shane Is Back

Written by Matthew Aguilar
Wednesday, 19 July 2006 19:00

All Shane Mosley was missing was some confidence. Now that he's got that, there's a chance he can regain his former title of best pound-for-pound fighter on the planet.

Not likely. But there's a chance.

His demolition of Fernando Vargas Saturday was impressive, if more than a tad predictable. He had pretty much mastered his California rival in the original fight on Feb. 25, when "Ferocious" Fernando's left eye took on the dimensions of a goiter in a 10th-round TKO defeat. But Golden Boy and Main Events convinced us all that, no, Sugar Shane didn't dominate Vargas. It was just a mirage, all those blistering right hands that caromed off of Vargas' face. That Mount Rushmore that popped up on his head? From butts, not punches.

That fight goes a little longer, you never know. Vargas was coming on. So we all bought it.

Damn, boxing fans are gullible.

But, round one of Mosley-Vargas 2 was simply a continuation of the beating Shane had issued back in February. Vargas, a slow, one-dimensional plodder these days, had no answer for Mosley's hand speed. He had no answer for it in the first fight, but his heart and guts made it interesting. He had heart and guts this time, but the reflexes were shot. All those months and years of training, and the beatings at the hands of Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya, had taken their toll.

Is his career over? Probably not. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Vargas just needs to stay away from speed demons. Instead of boxer-punchers like Mosley, he needs to fight fellow sluggers like Ricardo Mayorga. They could put Vargas-Mayorga on pay-per-view and I'd buy it. So would you.

Things are much brighter for Mosley, who was the third coming of Sugar Ray until he ran into a Viper (Vernon Forrest) four years ago. The Vargas fights are as good as Mosley has looked since his Forrest defeats. Which proves that his demise wasn't physical. It was psychological. He thought he was invincible before the Forrest fight. And when he found that he wasn't, he began to doubt himself.

So he became reluctant. He became timid.

It didn't help that he inexplicably moved up to junior middleweight and fought much bigger men like Winky Wright. As a natural lightweight, he should have never gone any further than welterweight. That he was still successful proves what kind of a talent he was, and is.

Now, there's all kinds of options available to him. Antonio Margarito is a possibility, if Margarito doesn't fight Wright. The Mexican is probably a good fight for Mosley. As he proved against

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Vargas, Sugar has the kind of style to frustrate a slugger like Margarito. However, the younger Margarito is a much fresher, possibly harder punching, version of Vargas. It would be risky, to say the least.

Then there's Floyd Mayweather Jr., whom every fighter from middleweight to lightweight seems to be pursuing. Does Mosley have a chance against the best fighter in the world? Yes. As Zab Judah showed in his April challenge of Mayweather, speed bothers "Pretty Boy" Floyd. Throw in the fact that Mosley is tough, iron-chinned, and seasoned at the elite level, and you have serious problems for Mayweather.

Serious problems.

In fact, he may better equipped to beat Mayweather than anybody, including Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton. It doesn't hurt that dad Jack is back in the corner, either. Familiarity breeds success. And success breeds confidence. That was never more evident than Saturday night.

After a long hiatus, "Sugar" Shane is back.

- Bizarre: Emanuel Steward is the best analyst in boxing. Hands down. No one can touch him. That said, his remark about Mosley wearing speed-friendly fashion, or something like that, made me scratch my head. And Vargas' brown trunks representing his slower, more methodical gameplan? Or something like that? Equally bizarre.

- Margarito vs. Wright: Sounds like this fight may happen, but it shouldn't. For Margarito's sake, anyway. Wright is bigger. He's a southpaw. And he's slick. The last time Margarito fought someone with those qualities, he was beaten. By Daniel Santos in September 2004. Stick to the welterweights, Antonio. That's your division. Anything above, especially against a fighter like Wright, and you're setting yourself up to lose.

- Speaking of: Santos, where has he been? And why is he continually ignored when the elite 154-pounders are discussed? Sure, he lost to a German in Germany back in December. That reeked of hometown decision. He bounced back with a first-round knockout on the Spinks-Karmazin undercard on July 8. If Wright wants a competitive fight so bad, against a fighter who never gets a chance — as he never got a chance in his obscure days — then fight Santos.