

Mosley Ready to Walk Through Fire

Written by David A. Avila
Monday, 22 October 2007 19:00

BIG BEAR LAKE, CALIFORNIA-A ring of clouds below surrounds Big Bear Mountain where at 8,000 feet elevation the skies are usually brilliant blue and the sun glistens off the waters of the lake.

Not now. Fire surrounds the mountain but this time the massive forest fires are not in Big Bear but nearby in Lake Arrowhead.

Training resumes despite the biggest fires in four years.

“It’s the best place to train for a fight.” says Shane Mosley as he wraps his hands with gauze.”

Now 36, Mosley (44-4, 37 KOs) runs through his regular training regimen in Big Bear Mountain like most people exhale and inhale oxygen, it’s all very routine. But on Nov. 10, the Pomona fighter will be facing WBA welterweight titleholder Miguel Cotto (30-0, 25 KOs) at Madison Square Garden.

It’s a match that takes fight fans breath away.

Both Jack and Shane Mosley have held training camps in the pine tree covered tourist town for nearly seven years. It’s been a sanctuary where they practiced and refined the tools of their craft for past opponents like Winky Wright, Fernando Vargas and Oscar De La Hoya.

A few years back Mosley bought the cabin that is located about 100 yards from a ski range and is about four blocks from De La Hoya’s former training camp. During that time Vargas also had a training camp about three miles north. Now Mosley remains the only one of the Southern California trio remaining in Big Bear.

“We like to get away up here,” said Jack Mosley, who returned to train his son for the second Vargas fight that ended in a knockout win for Mosley. “I designed all of the outside of this place.”

Guarding the Mosley camp are two fearsome gray colored dogs that look like gargoyles come to life. They don’t bark much but will growl and readily show their teeth. Kind of like their owner.

Mosley never has been one to boast, brag or predict the outcomes of his future fights. Usually he mildly sits through press conferences with his easy-going manner discussing his opponent’s traits. But inside the ring he transforms into a fearsome sight.

“What can I say, he beat me twice,” said De La Hoya. “He does so many things well.”

Mosley has slowly transformed from an athletically gifted prizefighter with uncanny speed combined with splendid power to an expert craftsman of his sport and still maintains his athleticism. He can easily break down an opponent’s tendencies, defensive style and trademark

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combinations.

Following a sparring session with a light heavyweight fighter Mosley showed the combinations he wants that fighter to adapt because it's similar to Cotto's.

"Cotto likes to throw this combination," says Mosley, who mimics the movement and punching style of his next opponent. "He likes to do other things too but that's his favorite move."

Before jumping in the ring Mosley observed his speedy young protégé named Billy "The Kid" Dib from Australia spar with former featherweight champion Freddie Norwood. Like math professors the two Mosleys quickly break down the formula of boxing science for the young featherweight who's in a fierce sparring session.

"That's how you learn by fighting somebody of championship caliber," says Mosley. "When he (Dib) fights somebody that good it won't be a surprise."

The former lightweight, welterweight and junior middleweight champion Mosley explained to Dib and others in the gym that sparring casually or against inferior opponents serves no purpose.

"When I was young I was sparring against the toughest guys I could find like Genaro Hernandez and Zack Padilla at the old Brooklyn Gym," said Shane Mosley about his war-like sparring sessions in a now defunct boxing gym located in East Los Angeles. "Sometimes I would come out of there dizzy. But it was the best sparring I could have."

Mosley related a story of his current Big Bear sparring partner who helped De La Hoya prepare for a fight a couple of years ago.

"That guy knocked down Oscar during sparring," said Mosley of his Puerto Rican sparring partner. He further explained that after getting flattened De La Hoya demanded that the Puerto Rican fighter be kept in his camp. "That's how you learn. You can't have it easy even in sparring."

Can take a punch

Cotto, 26, who's become more impressive since moving up in weight from 140 pounds to 147, has the same easy-going manner and refuses to degrade opponents.

"Shane Mosley is a great champion with a lot of experience," Cotto says. "I've heard that Shane Mosley can take a good punch."

Mosley expects the WBA champion Cotto to maintain his famous pressure style that includes concentrating to the body with heavy and sharp punches.

"Miguel Cotto is a very strong fighter. He likes to throw that left hand. That's his best punch," says Mosley while demonstrating the Cotto left hook. "It's different fighting somebody his size."

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In the past, Mosley's opponents were all much taller and posed a different target for the speedy Pomona fighter's punches.

"It's a big difference punching somebody taller, it makes you change everything," he says.

In his last fight, Mosley bested Luis Collazo a slick southpaw Puerto Rican fighting out of Brooklyn. Now he faces a strong Puerto Rican fighter from the island, who blasted out his last two opponents.

Mosley shrugs and smiles when asked about Cotto.

"I've seen him fight quite a few times," said Mosley, as his mind races through his memory banks recalling Cotto's fights.

Bob Arum, who is co-promoting the event with Golden Boy Promotions, said Cotto was dubbed a future superstar when he participated as an Olympian for Puerto Rico in 2000. Now he simply needs to beat a superstar to be a superstar.

Cotto's uncle feels his nephew stands at the precipice.

"We're waiting to fight one of the best pound for pound fighters in the world," said Evangelista Cotto, uncle and trainer of Miguel Cotto. "We'll see if Miguel can beat a pound for pound fighter."

Outside the Big Bear training camp compound, the pair of guard dogs are mulling around not concentrating on any single person but acutely aware of people milling around. Inside the boxing gym Mosley spars with a muscular fighter who out-weighs him by 30 pounds but has speed in his punches.

Nothing is planned.

"It's better to be prepared for anything," says Mosley. "After training up here in the mountains I feel much stronger when I get to sea level."

After the two-hour workout concludes, the gate to the compound closes and in the background the two guard dogs perk their heads up. They're prepared for anything too.