

At a ripe old age of 37, Shane Mosley, the heir of the holy moniker "Sugar", still has the fire that burns within.

"I was looking for Miguel Cotto again or Antonio Margarito," said Mosley, the masterful legend in the final stages of a Hall of Fame worthy career.

But before he puts his last stroke on his career canvas, he must traverse the hurdle of Ricardo Mayorga, a man that has brutally knocked out Vernon Forrest, who happens to be the first pugilist in pro fistic history to force Mosley to taste the bitterness of defeat.

"Sugar" Shane will clash against the "El Matador" in a 12-round junior middleweight duel tomorrow at the Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif.

Below is my pre-fight breakdown of this entertaining boxing show in terms of strengths and weaknesses of both fighters and the predicted outcome.

"Sugar" Shane Mosley

Strengths

Overall boxing ability: Mosley is a natural in the ring with superb athleticism. He can box, punch and brawl, if necessary, with a technician's grace. His body shots are devastating, as shown to best effect in his rematch with Oscar De La Hoya.

Speed edge: Speed was what Mosley was known for when the prime lightweight unleashed five- and six-punch combinations in the blink of an eye before darting out of reach of his opponent. Despite the fact that time has caught up with the veteran ringman, and his blinding speed and lightning-sharp reflexes have waned, there is no way that he will pose as the slower man in his 12-round 154-pound HBO main event.

Solid chin: Mosley has shown that his whiskers are second to none. During his 15 years as a professional, in 49 solid fistic affairs including 20 championship fights, Mosley has never been knocked out and merely tasted canvas in one fight; in the second stanza of his first clash with the current WBC junior middleweight titlist Vernon Forrest, he was floored twice after sustaining a cut on the hairline.

Reach advantage: When competing at the junior middleweight, Mosley is by no means a big man, yet his Nicaraguan opponent is no taller than he. Both fighters stand at 5'9", but Mosley holds a four-inch advantage in reach, 74" to Mayorga's 70", which stands out as a major factor in this fight.

Weaknesses

TSS Closer Look: Mosley/Mayorga

Written by Zhenyu Li

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Age: Father Time has been known as a merciless killer who stops the water supply to a fighter's fountain of talent without warning. This is even true for the well-preserved 37-year-old Mosley. "Sugar" Shane has slowed down ever since suffering back-to-back losses to Ronald Wright four years ago in their 154-pound division championship fights. Although he's still fighting at the elite level in one of boxing's deepest divisions, the veteran looked somewhat lethargic and less sharp than his prime self, even in his much-praised 12-round showdowns with the two talented young guns -- Luis Collazo and Miguel Cotto.

Can't carry the weight: It was known that Mosley had been a murderous knockout artist, stopping 35 of his first 38 opponents, but that feat was accomplished by the lightweight and welterweight Mosley. Ever since he blasted out Adrian Stone in three in 2001, the once power-punching sensation has only stopped his opponents in two of his last eleven bouts during the entire seven years. He has never scored a knockout in the 154-pound division.

Ricardo Mayorga

Strengths

Undeniable power: Although he's 34, the one-punch killer Mayorga still has the ability to take his opponent's mind out of the arena in the blink of an eye, which is why he has been recognized by many as a legitimate menace in the junior middleweight landscape.

Unpredictability: Mayorga is a wild unorthodox mauler who throws punches from all kinds of angles. He seems never to be where he should be, making his opponent uneasy as the foe attempts to guess where punches will be launched from.

Relentless aggression: The free-swinging brawler is not in a position to apply steady and consistent pressure, but can do so in wild flurries. He throws punches all over the place, which usually catch his opponent off guard, as was witnessed in his championship bout against the WBA reigning champ Andrew Lewis and his unification war with the then WBC welterweight titleholder Vernon Forrest.

Tons of heart: El Matador has proven that his chin can usually withstand the heaviest onslaught, and even if he was knocked sharply to the canvas, he has the guts to get up and not showed a single sign of fear in the midst of storm.

Weaknesses

Style: Mayorga's mauling street-fighting style is a two-edged sword. He is known for his power punches, yet the big problem is how he throws them. Those punches thrown are mostly wide, looping power shots that usually results in his generous openings to counter attacks.

Sloppy defence: With almost a zero defense to speak of, his only defense, as it were, lies in his tough set of whiskers. The flat-footed punching machine walks straight into his opponents and uses little head movement, which makes him an easy target to hit.

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Suffered numerous beatings: A brawling maniac, Mayorga has an inclination to turn boxing matches into total wars. And that usually results in a short-ended career. He has taken the best punches from Andrew Lewis, Vernon Forrest, Felix Trinidad, Oscar De La Hoya and Fernando Vargas...any fight could be his last, really.

Prediction

Since both fighters have a solid chin, and Mosley lacks the ability to carry power with the higher weight, this fight will more than likely go to the distance.

Mosley will fight a strategic game, making full use of his speed, outlanding Mayorga in shots and systematically breaking down the bull rush, resulting in a clear unanimous decision victory for the masterful "Sugar" Shane.

Look for him to get past this business and the challenge all comers, established and up 'n coming, as he moves into the final phase of a shining career.

Zhenyu Li is the columnist for People's Daily online and a member of the International Boxing Research Organization. He can be reached at zhenyuli_cn@sina.com.