

Caballero: Fans Can't Fight For You

Written by Rick Folstad

Tuesday, 18 November 2008 19:00

Tip your hat to Panama's Celestino Caballero. Shake his hand, pat him on the back and wish him luck. He's earned it. You don't go into a strange neighborhood looking for a fight without a little swagger in your step.

But Caballero isn't really buying into this home-field advantage hogwash. If he thought a fighter got a big edge by staying home and fighting in his own back yard, he probably wouldn't be catching a plane out of Panama City to fly to Ontario, Canada in mid-November. The only reason most people might go north into Canada at this time of year is to catch a hockey game, visit friends or maybe ice fish. You don't visit Canada for its warm beaches.

Caballero is flying north to both defend his WBA super-bantamweight title and to win the IBF belt presently in the frozen grasp of Steve Molitor, the undefeated "Canadian Kid."

Unification is a pretty thing.

According to the people who keep track of these things, Friday night's 12-round title unification fight at Casino Rama will be the first of its kind in the eight-year history of ShoBox, and the first unification bout ever hosted by Canada. Along with being televised in the United States, the fight will also be shown across Canada on TSN.

"It doesn't really affect me going to Canada," said Caballero (30-2, 21 KOs) in a recent conference call. "We could fight anywhere and it wouldn't make a difference. Fighters fight. We don't see any advantage Steve can get from the hometown crowd because once you're inside the ring, a fight is a fight. Fans can't fight for you. We don't see it being an obstacle."

Neither does Molitor (28-0, 11 KOs). He won the IBF title two years ago when he stopped Michael Hunter in a fight in England, which is a long way from Ontario, Canada and the friendly folks back home.

"Like Caballero said, once the bell rings, no fans can fight for you," Molitor said, maybe smiling to himself a little. "Sure, it's nice for them to cheer you on, stuff like that. But it's man versus man. The crowd doesn't really have an effect. That's the way it was in England. (Hunter) could have had a million people there and it wouldn't have made any difference. It's just me versus him."

This newest episode of "me versus him," holds a lot of possibilities. Molitor is listed at 5-foot-7. And he's (gasp) a southpaw. Caballero is a 5-foot-11 right-hander and very tall for a super-bantamweight.

That's why most of Molitor's sparring partners look like they've been recruited off the basketball court. At 6-foot and 6-foot-1, they've been getting good long looks at the top of Molitor's head.

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“(Caballero’s height) is definitely going to be an obstacle,” Molitor said. “A 5-foot-11, 122-pounder is unheard of. But with my hand and foot speed and with the sparring we’ve brought in, we’ll be ready.”

Apparently lack of confidence doesn’t seem to be a problem for either side. Molitor says whatever Caballero brings, they’ll have an “antidote” for it.

“Whatever we want to do in there, we’re just going to do it,” said Molitor, who has wins over Fernando Beltran Jr., and Fashan 3K Battery.

Caballero put this fight right up there in the lofty place he’s put all his other fights. He said he’s approaching it no different than all the rest.

“I’m prepared for Molitor and what he’s going to bring,” said Caballero, who has wins over guys like Daniel Ponce de Leon, Jose Valbuena and Lorenzo Parra. “As far as Molitor being the best I’ve seen in the ring, I respect every opponent, no matter their record, no matter their title belts. I approach each opponent the same way.”

Yeah, with a long reach and some serious pop.

Promoter Allan Tremblay put it in perspective, saying it was “arguably the biggest fight in the history of Canada.”

“I want to welcome Mr. Caballero,” Tremblay said. “He will be treated exceptionally well as everybody is when they come here.”

For now, anyway.

TORONTO, ON – November 18, 2008 – Puerto Rico's Luis Pabon has been given the refereeing assignment for Friday night's Super Bantamweight title unification bout between IBF champion, "The Canadian Kid" Steve Molitor, and WBA kingpin, Celestino Caballero, of Panama.

Like Pabon, all three ringside judges scoring the bout are geographically neutral, with Connecticut's Glenn Feldman, New Jersey's Eugene Grant, and Thomas Miller of Ohio rendering the decision should the fight go to the scorecards.

Supervising from ringside will be IBF representative Lindsey Tucker, and the WBA's Michael Welsh, both hailing from New Jersey.

Steve Molitor vs. Celestino Caballero, the first unification fight ever held in Canada, will be televised live in the US on Showtime's popular ShoBox: The Next Generation series, and across Canada on TSN, beginning at 11:00 PM Eastern (Tape delayed on the West coast in the US).

Tickets for Rumble at Rama VI are \$50/\$75/\$125/\$175 and are available in-person at the

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Casino Rama Box Office, at all TicketMaster locations, by calling (416) 870-8000 and online at www.casinorama.com

. Ticket prices do not include applicable taxes or service charges.