

The Electric Mosley-Margarito Show

Written by David A. Avila

Thursday, 22 January 2009 19:00

Numbers, numbers, numbers.

If you're an ardent fan of the sweet science then you're quite possibly one of those people that looks at two fighter's records, the knockouts, the ability to refrain from being a knockout victim and of course their age.

Often, during a televised fight, the announcers will take a look at the fighter's records and quickly deduce that a certain boxer has no punch. Or another will say that because of the records of this fighter's opponents, he's untested and not ready for prime time exposure.

Boxing is very much like baseball in that respect, the numbers often tell the story in advance, but not always.

Take this match coming up between WBA welterweight titleholder Antonio Margarito (37-5, 27 KOs) and former three-division world champion Sugar Shane Mosley (45-5, 38 KOs) on Saturday Jan. 24, at Staples Center in Los Angeles. According to the numbers, it all adds up to a one-sided massacre.

Or does it?

A quick survey of Margarito's record shows that he chopped down Puerto Rico's Miguel Cotto in 11 rounds. Cotto beat Mosley in a close fight.

Margarito annihilated Cotto, forcing his corner to throw in the towel. It was brutal.

Another look at Margarito's record shows that he is only 30 years old while Mosley is 37. That's a seven-year difference that usually means the older fighter has taken more punches via sparring and prizefighting. Usually.

Like baseball, just because a batter has a .357 batting average doesn't mean he can hit Sandy Koufax. It could mean that batter actually hits .427 against nondescript pitchers while hitting only .150 against premier hurlers with 2.00 earned run averages.

Boxing is like that too.

You could put a guy with 40 knockouts in 40 fights against somebody that's 23-20 and it doesn't mean that undefeated jawbreaker is going to win the fight. Because if that 50-50 fighter has been scrapping with top tier fighters while the undefeated slugger has only fought four-round fighters, then it could mean trouble for the guy with the zeroes.

Body erosion

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Let's compare the age between the two elite welterweights.

Margarito began boxing professionally in January 1994 at the age of 15 years old. When he should have been a freshman in high school, he was already trading punches with some pretty hefty punchers and skilled veterans. That's not including the countless rounds of sparring every day against world-class sluggers in Tijuana and the gyms of Los Angeles. He was in bucket of blood skirmishes with murderous punches. Sure he wore headgear, but it still hurts and the punches to the chin will still put you out.

Mosley began in 1993 at age 21. That's only one-year before Margarito. At the early age of seven, the Pomona boxer was in weekly amateur tournaments. By the time he exited the amateur program he surpassed 300 bouts. Then he entered the pro world and like Margarito he was in ring wars with guys like Genaro Hernandez, Julio Cesar Chavez, and Zack "Attack" Padilla a nonstop punching machine who actually established the record for punches in a junior welterweight championship bout when he held the WBO title. When Mosley would spar with those fighters it was brutal and amazing at the same time, like watching a masterpiece without the fanfare. Many of those bloody skirmishes took place in the old Brooklyn Gym and various other L.A. haunts.

Other points

Mosley definitely knows how to box against a volume puncher and Margarito absolutely knows how to attack a boxer. So who wins this contest?

Because Mosley has sparred with mostly Mexicans for half of his life, we're talking about a guy who basically has a doctorate in the art of the body blow. Margarito has the same degree and is basically acknowledged as the wunderkind on the tactic. Who wins this?

Speed is the one asset Mosley possesses that Margarito definitely does not. The Pomona boxer has the faster hands, but Margarito has the longer arms. Mosley has the better jab, Margarito doesn't throw a jab, he just throws 100 rounds of 50-caliber bullets at you. One or more of those shells are going to land.

For half of Margarito's life the fighter known as the "Tijuana Tornado" has mixed blows against some of the top welterweights in the world. And when you consider his battering pressure style, that's a lot of punishment taken over the years.

"That's his style, he likes to pressure guys," said Mosley, who is considered the underdog for a bid to win an eighth world title. "He likes to fight inside and I don't mind fighting inside."

Mosley has been studying Margarito and actually admires him. He's his kind of fighter. Margarito respects Mosley too.

"Shane Mosley has a lot of experience," admits Margarito, who shellacked Miguel Cotto last summer in winning a third welterweight world title. "Everybody knows what I like to do, I like to pressure fighters."

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Face armor

One thing both fighters do have on equal ground is a chin made of titanium steel. And because both have virtually fought the same number of years in a professional ring, they both have the same wear and tear.

The Mexican brawler has been taking big blows to his head and body for 15 years against hard-hitting guys like Daniel Santos, Rodney Jones, Danny Perez, Kermit Cintron and Miguel Cotto.

Those are all deadly hammer-fisted guys that tested Margarito's chin.

On the other side, there is speedy Mosley who also had a few big blows bounce off his noggin. Guys like Manuel "Shotgun" Gomez, Oscar De La Hoya, Vernon Forrest, Fernando Vargas and Cotto can vouch for the Pomona fighter's ability to take a punch.

"I know I'm not going down," says Mosley chuckling. "You can count on that."

Margarito is equally proud of his ability to withstand the knockout.

But you never know which blow could be the one to finally shatter the bulletproof glass.

"I think that I do have a good chin," says Margarito who trained in Montebello for this fight. "It's my preparation that allows me to take some punches."

Body electric

Sure both Mosley and Margarito can take a hook to the jaw with the best, but can they take a good shot to the liver or solar plexus?

"Everybody has a weakness," said Mosley almost hesitantly, maybe because he knows he has the same vulnerable spot that no one has exploited. "I'm good at going to the body too."

Margarito has never been tested with a body blow by someone who can deliver a shocker with deadly accuracy like Mosley. The same goes for Mosley. Can he withstand a Margarito special to the body?

When either fighter lands that perfect shot to the body you will see the body paralyze like it was hit with 10,000 volts of electricity.

"They say Mosley is old and all of this but I really don't see it. I think he's a great champion," said Margarito. "I really don't see that I have any advantages anywhere over him."

Mosley concurs and equally believes it will be a nip and tuck battle for 12 rounds.

"Margarito is definitely a tough fighter. He's a warrior and everything he's got, he earned," said

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Mosley. "He took the long road up, the hard road up."

Add up all the numbers and computations between these two boxers and all you will find is that it equals a great fight.