

The Ghost Leads Southpaws In San Jose

Written by David A. Avila
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Nobody likes to fight southpaws.

First, they do everything in reverse. Their jabs come from another side, their power is from opposite angle and their thinking is totally unorthodox.

Most boxers hate southpaws.

And when you have a left-handed boxer with speed and power then you have a nightmare of major proportions.

Welcome to hell for right-handers when Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero, Vicious Victor Ortiz and James Kirkland enter the ring at the HP Pavilion in San Jose on Saturday, March 7. All three prizefighters are left-handed sluggers with speed.

Let's look at the Ghost.

Here is a fighter who in the first three years of his career with strictly speed and power blitzed through opposition with a left hand packed with enough power to light up the entire city of Gilroy.

Guerrero hits hard.

In his last fight at the Staples Center a few weeks ago, Guerrero nitroed veteran Mexican boxer Edel "Cuate" Ruiz with the first punch he landed. About a minute after the fight he strolled up to press row to talk to a few of the boxing reporters and didn't have a speck of perspiration on his brow.

That's a cool customer.

Guerrero (23-1-1, 16 KOs) faces Indonesia's little-known Daud Yordan (23-0, 17 KOs) in a 10-round junior lightweight clash. If boxing fans learned anything this past weekend it's to not sleep on any of these Indonesian cats after watching Chris John go to work in Houston.

Yordan fought last September in Las Vegas against Mexicali's tough Antonio Ruiz and came away with a tight majority decision win. Now he's graduating to the elite level against former IBF featherweight titleholder Guerrero who is moving up in weight.

"This weight was so easy to make," said Guerrero about fighting at 130 instead of 126 pounds. "It feels great."

Kirkland (24-0, 21 KOs) is another southpaw bomber who has that combination of power and speed. But he has a tough match against Colombia's Joel Julio (34-2, 31 KOs), whose

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experience in title fights has to pay off somewhere.

The Texas lefty had a really difficult time against Brandon Vera who was able to take most of his bombs like an old metal bomb shelter. Kirkland kept firing and Vera kept coming. But eventually, the referee tired of seeing Vera's head snap back and ended the junior middleweight contest.

Julio has lost on the big stage twice. But since losing to Carlos Quintana several years ago, the Colombian has begun to appreciate the finer art of boxing instead of relying on his power. He thinks before he throws nowadays and that could be trouble for Kirkland who is much like the younger Julio.

In the third marquee fight, it's Oxnard's power plunging Ortiz (23-1-1, 18 KOs) matching skills against veteran Mighty Mike Arnaoutis (21-2-2, 10 KOs) in a junior welterweight contest.

So far no right-handed boxer has been able to withstand the two-fisted power attack of Ortiz, who strikes quickly and with finality. The trouble is that Arnaoutis is a southpaw too.

It's lefty versus lefty and that will prove a problem for whoever cannot adapt to seeing an opponent fighting with the opposite foot forward.

Ortiz has never fought a skilled left-handed prizefighter and he's getting a good one in Arnaoutis. So far, the Greek prizefighter has been unable to crack the top of the division and has been handed defeats by bombers Kendall Holt and Ricardo Torres.

The last time Arnaoutis traveled to California in 2005 he fought Robert Santa Cruz and was fortunate to win by majority decision. Many felt Santa Cruz won the fight easily. No matter. That was four years ago.

San Jose, here they come.

"Being born and raised out here, it's exciting," said Guerrero. "There are a lot of big boxing fans out here."

Northern California Rebirth

Back in the 1960s in Northern California, there were tons of popular and talented prizefighters like Carl "Bobo" Olson and Eddie Machen. The upper part of California always had great prizefighters going way back to Gentleman Jim Corbett in the 1890s and Fidel LaBarba in the 1920s.

It was actually wilder and more lawless than Los Angeles.

With civility came less interest in the manly sport of boxing. That is until Guerrero and his brand of boxing took root. The young man who looks more like an art student than a student of the sweet science has grabbed attention with spectacular knockouts and a do-or-die intensity in the

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ring.

Guerrero comes from the city of Gilroy (population 50,000), known as the garlic capital of the world. But don't expect the former IBF featherweight champion to stink up the joint.

Usually, Guerrero's fights end with a knockout flourish that would make George Foreman envious. The slim slugger has more ways to end a fight by sudden knockout than can be normally expected from a boxer weighing less than 130 pounds.

Guerrero can crank it up.

Fans are expected to respond to Guerrero's first major fight near his home in nearly three years. He loves fighting in the HP Pavilion.

"It's a treat to be fighting in front of the hometown fans," says Guerrero, who vacated the IBF featherweight title to move up in weight and try the heavier guys. "I feel honored to be in this position. A lot of fans have been dying to see watch me fight at the HP (Pavilion) again."

The last time Guerrero stepped in the boxing ring in San Jose, he fought and beat Sandro Marcos in three rounds. This time he faces an undefeated fighter.

"I know he has quick feet and quick hands," Guerrero said of Yordan.

It's also the Gilroy boxer's second fight with his new promotion company.

Arce loses

Francisco "Panchito" Arce (28-5-2, 19 KOs) lost to South Africa's Simphiwe Nongqayi (15-0, 6 KOs) in a 12 round elimination bout for the IBF super flyweight title. The match was held in Arce's hometown of Los Mochis, Mexico. A knockdown suffered in the 11th round by Arce proved too much for the younger brother of Jorge Arce.

Korea world title fight

Hollie "Hot Stuff" Dunaway (21-8-1, 10 KOs) lost her bid to win the IFBA strawweight title from South Korea's Ji-Hyun Park (8-2) on Sunday. Dunaway lost by decision to the Korean fighter after 10 rounds.

Goossen-Tutor signs another Olympian

Javier Molina, who was a U.S. Olympian this past summer, signed a contract with Goossen-Tutor Promotions, said the boxing company.

Molina is the second 2008 Olympian to sign with the Sherman Oaks-based company. East L.A. boxer Shawn Estrada signed earlier. Coincidentally, Molina trains at Commerce Boxing Club that is about one mile south of Estrada's gym in East L.A.

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Molina will make his pro debut at the Nokia Theater in Los Angeles on March 27.

In the past 10 years a lot of talent has emerged from the tiny Commerce Boxing Club. Javier's twin brother Oscar also trains there. Another Molina brother, Carlos, was taught there and Francisco "Panchito" Bojado learned his craft at that gym too.

Coincidence?

Fights on television

Fri. ESPN2, 6 p.m., Delvin Rodriguez (23-2-2) vs. Shamone Alvarez (20-1).

Fri. Azteca, 9 p.m., Robert Frankel (26-9-1) vs. Ricardo Dominguez (26-4-2).

Sat. HBO, 7 p.m., Robert Guerrero (23-1-1) vs. David Yordan (23-0); Victor Ortiz (23-1-1) vs. Mike Arnaoutis (21-2-2); James Kirkland (24-0) vs. Joel Julio (34-2).