

## Styles Make Fights, And Forrest Knew How To Beat Mosley

Written by Frank Lotierzo  
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With the unforeseen and tragic passing of Vernon Forrest this past weekend, it's hard not to think about how he performed in the two signature bouts of his career, versus undefeated Shane Mosley. Also, we recall how he was avoided by both Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya when they held two of the alphabet welterweight title belts. Forrest had been ranked near the top of the welterweight division for quite some time while Oscar and Felix were making safe title defenses insuring nothing would upset their pending upcoming showdown.

Due to some unlucky circumstances that he couldn't control, Forrest had to wait for the second most anticipated welterweight championship bout in history, De La Hoya vs. Trinidad (Sept. 1999) (Leonard vs. Hearns I was the most) to take place before he could finally get his overdue shot. Had it not been for Trinidad moving up to junior middleweight after taking the WBC welterweight title from De La Hoya, and then Shane Mosley beating De La Hoya (June 2000) to recapture it after Trinidad vacated it, Forrest would've been frozen out of the title picture even longer.

Speaking of Mosley, as great as he is/was, he could never quite figure out how to adjust and navigate Forrest. Granted, a lot of that had to do with size and physics, but just as much of it had to do with Vernon knowing how to fight Shane. On top of that, it seemed since Forrest beat Mosley during the box-offs during the 1992 Olympic Trials he seemed so sure of himself fighting Mosley. However, in all fairness to Mosley, Shane didn't approach Forrest for their first fight with anything that looked like fear or trepidation and did go right at Vernon in the first round.

For Mosley, fighting Forrest was a real catch-22. Shane likes to fight as the counter-puncher looking to draw his opponent to him and then beat him with a flurry of punches right before or after his opponent lets his hands go. When fighting an opponent who Mosley feels he can over-power, he'll push the fight behind his power jab and look to come over the top with his overhand right thus opening up his opponent for his inside hooks and uppercuts--a beautiful execution to watch when the opponent has nothing to refute him with.

Enter Vernon "The Viper" Forrest.

Forrest had an answer for everything Mosley tried and posed some questions stylistically that he could never quite answer. Forrest's long jab aimed between Mosley's sternum and chin foiled Shane's sporadic advances. Although Mosley tried to give Forrest some head movement he was upright too much and was almost a sitting duck for Forrest's jab, which really put Mosley in a fix. Because when he moved back and away, it was Forrest who was controlling the tempo and distance. With Mosley on the defense he's forced to either take almost blind rushes at Forrest or try to counter him if he misses. The problem with that was Forrest is throwing his long straight jab that put Mosley too far out of range to counter him back. The other problem with Mosley being forced to move away from Vernon's jab is, whenever he stops, here comes Forrest's straight and accurate right hand to the chin and head.

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When Mosley tried to adjust and somehow stabilize the fight with his quick hands and flurries, he ran into another problem. That being to keep Forrest off, he had to try and put a little hurt on him hoping to hold him off. To do that, Shane had to take the lead and attempt to bring the fight to Forrest. Only this left him open and vulnerable to Forrest's jabs and right hands on the way in, and every time he tried to get low he was met by Forrest's left uppercuts at center-ring and right uppercuts when he was cornered or against the ropes.

The other problem Forrest provided for Mosley was that he took Mosley's jab away. With Forrest's jab getting there first, Mosley was not only knocked out of punching range for his left, but he had to lunge and reach with his right hand. Forrest was able to see this develop and was successful at catching Mosley with his own right hands and forcing him to hold or break off the exchange. By Forrest forcing Mosley to reach with his right hand, he basically took Shane's Sunday punch out of the fight and lessened the odds of him turning the fight with one shot. Therefore he basically had Mosley looking to use the ring to survive and hope Forrest would make a mistake and try to catch lightning in a bottle if he did.

Due to Forrest having the answer and punch assortment for anything Mosley attempted to do, Shane's work rate decreased. Forrest's long arms and straight punches slowly over the course of the fight sapped Mosley a little mentally. Once Forrest was being met with less resistance, he started going down to Mosley's body with sweeping left-hooks that pretty much took everything out of him physically and slowed him to a walk. Due to Mosley's gameness and toughness, he attempted to fight back in flurries, but to no avail and went on to lose a one sided decision and his welterweight title.

In the rematch Mosley gave Forrest more head and shoulder feints and tried to sucker him by jumping in with lead left-hooks. Sometimes he caught Forrest and other times he missed by a considerable amount due to Forrest knocking him out of range with his straight punches to his head and body. During the second bout Mosley moved his feet more and tried to bluff Forrest into not throwing, hoping to get off first himself. This was about the most effective change Mosley made strategically, and via doing such, Mosley shook Forrest a few times with his overhand rights to the head. However, when all was said and done, Forrest's straight punching and size kept Mosley from taking all the necessary chances he needed to in order to pull the fight out. The Forrest-Mosley rematch was closer than the first encounter between them, but it was another clear win for Forrest.

Ironically, in his first defense of the welterweight title he won from Mosley, Forrest would defend it in January 2003 against a fighter named Ricardo Mayorga, who wasn't on his level as a boxer, but had his number. In their first meeting Forrest was totally thrown by the hard punching and wild swinging Mayorga. He was hurt early in the fight and the crude Mayorga fed off of the seed of doubt he put into Forrest's mind, thus leading him to turn up the pressure and ultimately stopping Forrest in the third round.

In the rematch six months later, Forrest tried to box more and for the first six rounds he looked as if he was unsure of himself and questioning whether or not he could handle the unorthodox Mayorga. In fact Forrest fought Mayorga for the first half of their rematch the same way Roy Jones fought the entire rubber match versus Antonio Tarver. In other words, Forrest was so

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consumed with not getting stopped that he fought with the purpose of not getting caught.

However, somewhere during the middle of the fight Forrest saw through Mayorga's shtick and instead of trying to even the score via a knockout win, he started using his reach and began peppering Mayorga with lefts and rights on the way in. Although he never really tried to follow up his clean one-tuos with any finishing hooks, he did just enough to keep Mayorga from really trying to assert himself. Although he didn't win the fight, Forrest did enough to convince one judge that he didn't lose as Mayorga was awarded a majority decision and kept the title.

In a twist of fate, Forrest rival Shane Mosley would knock Mayorga out five years later in a fight that would earn him a title shot that he would go on to win. Once again the most true saying in boxing, "Styles Make Fights," holds true.

Forrest owned Mosley, Mayorga owned Forrest, and Mosley owned Mayorga!

Vernon Forrest was an outstanding fighter who fought the best of the best of his era. He will be forever remembered as fighter who beat Shane Mosley when many considered Mosley to be the best pound for pound fighter in boxing. He will be greatly missed as a fighter and man.

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