

De La Hoya vs. Mosley II: It Could Be Over For Loser

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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In less than a month Oscar DeLaHoya and Shane Mosley will be fighting a rematch against each other. The last time DeLaHoya and Mosley shared a ring together back on June 17th of 2000, Mosley dealt DeLaHoya his second career defeat. In the midst of beating Oscar, Mosley won the WBC welterweight title. As far as I'm concerned, Mosley never received his due praise for beating DeLaHoya. Remember, he beat DeLaHoya in only his third fight as a welterweight after moving up from lightweight by-passing the junior welterweight division, and he beat him more soundly and convincingly than Felix Trinidad.

The DeLaHoya-Mosley fight was very close through round six. However from the seventh round on, it was Mosley's fight. I don't know how the judges scored it a split decision, I thought it was a clear Mosley win and should've been unanimous. The win catapulted Mosley into being recognized as one of top pound for pound fighters in the world, (I hate the pound for pound mythical ratings crap) and the defeat raised some questions about DeLaHoya's future.

Since their first fight, their careers have gone in opposite directions. DeLaHoya seems to have rounded out his overall game, and has grown more confident since losing to Mosley. On the other hand, Mosley has stumbled and seems a little unsure of exactly what he wants to do and what style he wants to fight.

In the three years since DeLaHoya lost to Mosley, he's fought four times, going 4-0 (3). Two of those wins were against fighters who had no chance to beat him. In stopping Arturo Gatti and Yory Boy Campas, he beat a fighter who he had a significant size advantage, (Gatti) and another fighter who has been on the wrong side of the hill for at least the last seven years (Campas). The other two wins were over solid legitimate world class fighters. In winning the IBF junior middleweight title from Javier Castillejo, DeLaHoya displayed his boxing ability, and an improved right hand. His other win was over long time rival Fernando Vargas in September of 2002. The Vargas fight may be one of his best overall performances.

In the Vargas fight, DeLaHoya faced a world class fighter who was young and hungry, and who also had longed to get Oscar in the ring. Vargas showed up in great shape and definitely gave it his best shot. The difference in the fight was that DeLaHoya was the better overall and more complete fighter. Some have speculated that DeLaHoya performed well against Vargas because the Trinidad fight softened Vargas up some. Though I don't believe all of that, I'll concede that it may have been a minor factor.

Since taking DeLaHoya's title, Mosley has gone 3-2 with one no contest. In Mosley's three wins, he stopped Antonio Diaz, Shannan Taylor, and Adrian Stone retaining his WBC welterweight title. Obviously those three are not in the same class as Forrest or DeLaHoya. In his fourth title defense Mosley was beaten soundly over 12 rounds by his long time nemesis Vernon Forrest. In their rematch six months later, Mosley put up a much better fight in losing a close decision, (I scored it 7-5 Forrest). In the rematch with Forrest, it was obvious that regardless how well prepared Mosley is for Forrest, he just doesn't match up well with him. Forrest's height and jab

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seem too big of an obstacle for Mosley to penetrate.

Mosley's last fight ended in a no contest when he accidentally head butt Raul Marquez in the third round. Though three rounds is hardly enough to judge any fighter on, it's at least safe to say that Shane's showing vs Marquez was less than stellar.

A Lot On The Line For Both

The rematch between DeLaHoya and Mosley could possibly be the most important fight in the careers of both fighters. It's a fight that neither can afford to lose. A loss in this fight will be monumental to both, and will be very hard to comeback from. For DeLaHoya, a loss to Mosley could not come at a worst time in his career. DeLaHoya is finally getting respect from even his harshest critics. DeLaHoya is one of the few fighters of today whose fought the best available. In my opinion, Mosley is the only fighter who has clearly defeated him.

That's why he has to beat Mosley. If he loses to Mosley, it will haunt him the rest of his career. No matter what he does, it will be said, yea, but he couldn't beat Mosley. There are potential huge fights out there looming with Mayorga, Forrest, and Hopkins. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if we end up seeing DeLaHoya fight and defeat both Mayorga and Forrest thus pushing the calender along aging Hopkins.

When it comes to DeLaHoya, I believe that Hopkins views him with the same disdain Marvin Hagler viewed Sugar Ray Leonard. Hagler looked at Leonard as a pretty boy media creation who got everything his way. Hagler didn't think Leonard was tough and would never agree to fight him because he thought Leonard feared him. That mind set probably cost him the fight. Leonard waited just long enough to challenge Hagler. Leonard saw some slippage in Hagler in his last fight against John Mugabi, and then jumped up and challenged him. Leonard knew that Hagler couldn't resist the money and a chance to have his name on his win column. By Leonard running the clock out, he caught Hagler at the perfect time.

I can see Hopkins making the same mistake against DeLaHoya. DeLaHoya is in no hurry to fight Hopkins. He knows that fight will be there when ever he wants it to happen. He knows that there are plenty of name fighters who he can be paid millions to fight while he's keeping Hopkins on the shelf getting older. He knows that the chances of him challenging Hopkins, and Hopkins refusing the challenge are virtually non existent. For this strategy to play out, he must get by Mosley to move on to the next phase.

In Mosley's case the fight is even bigger. If he loses to DeLaHoya in their rematch, he'll basically become a trial horse for up and coming fighters. A loss puts Mosley in a tough spot. He'll be to risky for established fighters to fight because he's still good and capable of beating them, and a win over him won't really guarantee you a spot at the top.

A Mosley defeat by DeLaHoya would make him 0-3 in his last three big fights. All of the sudden we'll be hearing how his only signature win out of the lightweight division was over a DeLaHoya who fought the wrong fight against him coming off the loss to Trinidad. Fighters like Vargas, Mayorga, and Wright will have no interest in fighting Shane. They'll look at him as a big risk

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without much to gain, where he'll look at them as a chance to get back in the title picture.

On the other hand, a win over DeLaHoya resurrects Mosley's career. Having beaten DeLaHoya twice will all but erase the two defeats by Forrest. Most will accept that Mosley is a better fighter than Forrest, but just doesn't match up with him. If Mosley can get by DeLaHoya than Mosley-Mayorga, Mosley-Vargas become huge fights and they are fights he would be favored in if he were to beat DeLaHoya.

The winner of the DeLaHoya-Mosley rematch puts himself in a tremendous position to continue on. With so many worthy opponents out there for him to fight, this is a must win. The sky is the limit for the winner, and the fall could be horrific for the loser. Obviously a loss for Mosley is much worse. No way Mosley will be afforded the cushion that DeLaHoya will most likely get if he loses.

Early Prediction: DeLaHoya by Unanimous Decision