Written by Lee Wylie
Tuesday, 13 March 2012 09:00

photo courtesy of John James/DiBella Entertainment

THE SETTING:

On March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, Britain's Matthew Macklin will surely need more than just the luck of the Irish when he meets Sergio Martinez at the Theater venue in Madison Square Garden, NY, in a twelve round bout that will be televised by HBO.

Martinez, 48-2-2 [27 kos] is not only THE premier middleweight in boxing, but he is also considered one of the top five pound for pound fighters as well. If not for a controversial decision loss to Paul Williams, that was reversed in devastating fashion with a stunning second round knockout in the rematch, Sergio could stake a claim to being unbeaten in almost twelve years. His winning streak, combined with the manner in which he has attained it, make Martinez one of the most the most dominant fighters in boxing outside the Klitschko brothers.

His wins over Pavlik [unbeaten at 160 at the time] Williams, Dzinziruk [unbeaten] and Barker are among the most impressive consecutive wins by any fighter currently competing today. If Macklin were to come away from the Garden victorious, it would surely trump Ricky Hatton's winning effort over Kostya Tzsyu as the biggest upset involving a British fighter in the modern era.

Similarly to Martinez against Williams, Macklin, 28-3 [19 kos] is no stranger at being on the wrong end of a controversial decision loss. Back in July of last year, Macklin lost a close, highly disputed fight to middleweight champion Felix Sturm. Despite the fight being in Sturm's backyard, many felt Macklin should have been awarded the decision, German television announcers included.

Apart from that loss, Macklin, like Martinez, is also on a healthy run at the moment. One would have to go all the way back to 2006 for Macklin's last legitimate loss, a tenth round stoppage at the hands of fellow Brit, Jamie Moore.

Although the time span of each fighter's winning run may bear a resemblance, the quality of opposition does not. Martinez has been fighting world class opposition, while Macklin has been campaigning against C level fighters.

A win for either man would prove significant.

Martinez will certainly have one eye on Floyd Mayweather's recent weight increase as a possible indication that Floyd may be willing to step up and face him. A win over Macklin and a fight between two of boxing's best becomes one step closer.

On the other hand, should Macklin reign supreme, he would be sky rocketed from mediocrity to magnificence in an instant. Boxing is full of rags to riches stories. With his Irish background, a win for Matthew Macklin on St Patrick's Day, in New York, over one of the elite fighters in boxing would be THE defining moment in his career and one of boxing's top stories in any year.

THE SCIENCE:

Martinez, 37, a natural southpaw, has a style all of his own. Sergio's relaxation and flashiness in the ring have led to many labeling him as arrogant which is not the case. These characteristics serve a purpose. Sergio is a very unconventional counterpuncher. Using his legs, Sergio is able to create a distance between himself and his opponent. Blessed with A+ hand and foot speed, Martinez can use an opponents' aggression against them. By feinting, moving backwards with his hands low, Sergio lures his opponents into a false sense of security. Backing up, Martinez can lead with fast, precise power shots, catching his opponents as they are coming in, then move off to a different angle. Sergio can throw a variety of punches with equal measure. Straight left hands and right hooks remain his signature shots. The unpredictability of his attack make his offense as good anyone's in boxing.

Martinez is one of the very few natural two handed fighters in the sport. He has ended fights with either hand. The right hand, either as a jab [Dzinziruk] or a right hook on the inside [Barker] has served him very well recently. Martinez' left hand is one of the most spectacular single shots in boxing, as was proven by his 2010 knockout of the year over Paul Williams. Against Kelly Pavlik, Martinez successfully showed how a fighter can be the effective aggressor whilst backing up. One of the better attributes in Sergio's repertoire is his ability to let his hands go whilst moving. Martinez does not need to plant his feet in order for him to generate power.

Defensively, Martinez is vastly underrated. He is seldom hit clean. Rather than use technical defense like Floyd Mayweather or Chad Dawson, Martinez, because of his superior athleticism, is more like that of a prime Roy Jones when it comes to defending. Using his legs as opposed to upper body movement, Martinez can travel in and out of the pocket before his opponent has a chance to respond, thus making him a very elusive target.

Matthew Macklin, 29, is not regarded as a technician. He is not some wild brawler either. An orthodox fighter, most of Macklin's emphasis is on the attack. He operates best in close inwhen going to the body with his lead left hand, which he can bring back up to the head as well. Macklin is very conventional with his movement, circling clockwise behind his jab. Macklin also

possesses very good head and upper body movement, thus making him more elusive than many might think.

While Macklin's hand and foot speed are far from great, he makes up for that with decent power, size and strength. In his last outing, Macklin displayed excellent in-fighting and aggression, going to the body relentlessly against Felix Sturm in a fight that many [this writer included] felt he won. Macklin's straight punches are decent enough but his hooks and uppercuts [his left in particular] can be fight changing.

Macklin's greatest properties going into this fight may be his chin and volume, two invaluable assets against a hard hitting counterpuncher.

At the moment, Macklin's confidence is sky high. He rightly believes he defeated Felix Sturm, who was a significant step up for him in terms of class. The difference between Sturm and Martinez though, is vast.

THE SCENARIO:

While the physicalities between the two fighters are similar, the physical gifts, like speed and athleticism belong to Martinez.

The biggest problem Macklin will face is the deficit in footspeed. Macklin must be quick enough to shorten the distance on Martinez, without just simply following him around the ring. Martinez' immense stamina level, because of his well documented cycling and soccer background, enables him to move laterally from bell to bell, without showing signs of fatigue. In order for Macklin to have success, he has to try and draw the attack out from Martinez, not allowing him to dictate when the attacks take place. Macklin must feint his way inside, trying to keep Martinez guessing and not the other way around. If Macklin's approach is as deliberate as it was against Sturm, it's not difficult to imagine the consequences. Darren Barker did well against Martinez in nearly making it to the end, but his emphasis was on defense, and his offense suffered as a result.

Macklin must get the defense/offense ratio perfect if he is to pose any real threat to Martinez. Matthew must try and cutthe ring off and get his left foot outside of the right foot of Martinez. Sergio likes to move counter clockwise behind his jab. If Macklin can get his feet into a dominant position, he has an opportunity to land his left hook. Macklin could also try and make Sergio take the lead, using feints and educated pressure. Easier said than done.

Here's the problem.

Martinez is at HIS best moving backwards, setting traps for his opponent to walk onto. Macklin is at HIS best going forward, being the aggressor.

This is why Martinez' style does not bode well for Macklin. Macklin has to be in close and static to let his hands go. Martinez can be out of range, moving away and STILL let his hands go.

The more aggression an opponent puts on Martinez, the better Martinez' style works, as a result of his fast hands and power.

In order for Macklin to have any real chance of winning, he would have to be something he is not. More intellect, less physical is what is needed to decipher Sergio's stylistic code.

Stranger things have happened in boxing. Maybe Martinez' lust for a bigger event has taken his eye off the ball, or maybe this is the fight in which Martinez' 37 years finally decide they no longer want to hang around with his young man's style of boxing. And maybe Macklin produces everybody's favourite "maybe" and lands something big on Martinez.

All evidence points to Martinez having the advantage in just about every department imaginable. Macklin will likely try and cut the ring off, only to taste Sergio's speed and power for his efforts. Macklin is tough, and he may see the final bell. But styles make fights, and Macklin's style by evidence does notnormally translate well against Martinez' style.

Martinez should be too fast. His footspeed will create the distance, and his handspeed will keep Macklin in his high guard for long periods. As the fight moves on, and with Macklin falling behind, he will likely neglect his defensive responsibility. Martinez will likely walk Macklin onto one of his fight ending power shots and put an end to the St. Patrick's day festivities.

Comment on this article

amayseng says:

Martinez could be in fact undefeated, he lost to Margacheato who may or may not have been cheating back in the day as well. Once a cheater always a cheater therefore all margacheatos wins should be stricken from the books.....secondly, many, myself included had martinez beating williams the first time and even the blind saw martinez beat Cintron...

martinez beats floyd mayweather like a red headed step child at 154 and knocks him out at 160.

after watching martinez vs williams rematch where martinez starched williams out like he was sniped from the top row floyd was found hiding under his bed...

deepwater says:

Martinez has a exciting style. The irish dude does not have enough speed to counter sergios style. buddy mcgirt sure did not teach him how to feint and cut off the ring. this fight should be non competitive thanks to sweet lou dibella protecting his cash cow. way to sell a fight lou. fight an irish guy at the garden on st pats day.easy money. There will be more competitive fights at the tracks bar or in the beer line at the garden.

ultimoshogun says:

A couple days ago I read an artcle on Fighthype that has since been removed about rumors circling the Martinez camp. Supposedly he hasn't been looking himself during training and there were "whispers" of him being dropped during a sparring session. I'm not insinuating we're in for an upset, but if these rumors have legs then this fight just got a whole lot more interesting.

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Probably just something leaked out on purpose so the people dont expect a blowout. ref stops

this contest on the quick for martinez. lou dibela the hometown advantage.

Radam G says:

Listen to deepwater. Dude know his boksing syet and the games that are played. Actually it's been the sparring mates of Sergio who have been getting da double fudge beat up and knocked down and out. I'm in Cali, and hiding in plain site, even at Martinez's camp. YUP! I get my sneak on. Hehehehe! I gotta keep a watch on dat bytch just in case, YOU KNOOOOOOWWWWWW ____ _____ _____ Da Manny in the future! Nine is quite divine.

All type of black propaganda is put out to try to pile up the gate attendance and eyeballs staring at those television tubes -- I mean micro-and-nano chips. Televisions are no tubes and jive. They have gone high tech with da chips dat my Asian mates put in. Holla!

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Yeah man. The truth= " Step right up ladies and gents and watch Lou dibellas middleweight champ move around the ring and counter punch a duddy like irish fighter for a few rounds. being that its st paddys day and all ,we will allow the irish fighter to fight on after he gets a nasty cut. The ref should jump in as soon as martinez flurries a few times. All for $200 bucks a ticket and $10 a beer. Happy st patricks day." p.s. sean monaghan is a can.

teaser says:

Macklin is as tough as nails..but Sergio will hammer him with counters from angles ...not gonna be a good nite for the Irish

ali says:

Amayseng leave Mayweather alone man

amayseng says:

@Ali.

Come on man that hiding under the bed comment was funny.

Floyd should have moved up and fought Sergio at mw.

Floyd walks around at 152-154

That would have been a legit respectable fight for Floyd.