

## The "Canelo" Phenomenon

Written by Ralph Gonzalez

Wednesday, 12 September 2012 21:23

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*It will be interesting moving forward to watch the rivalry between Canelo and Julio Cesar Chavez Jr; both men glove up Saturday night, so we shall see how this sort-of faceoff plays out. Canelo does seem to have that heart-throb thing going for him, more so than Junior, no?*

At 22 years old, Saul "Canelo" Alvarez (40-0-1, 29 KO's) has reached a level of stardom few boxers have ever attained.

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What is it about the red-haired, freckled faced kid out of Juanacatlán, Mexico that attracted a reported 30,000 fans to a press conference prior to his fight versus former world champion Shane Mosley?

On the under card of the Mayweather-Cotto pay per view against Mosley, Alvarez looked every bit the part of boxing's newest sensation. His youth and work rate were too much for the once formidable champion.

But let's put the win in its proper context. The Mosley that showed up on 2012 in Vegas against Alvarez, wasn't nearly the same Mosley that scored two career defining wins against Oscar De La Hoya in 2000 and 2003.

It doesn't seem to matter. Whenever "Canelo" fights, people tune in.

His performances are exciting and his boxer-puncher style is fun to watch. The fact that he's a Mexican red-head who'd have no problem blending in with the population in Ireland or Scotland can't be overlooked.

"He's a red headed fighter and it's unusual in Mexico. It definitely gets him more attention," stated boxing fan Miguel Jimenez when quizzed on the subject. "He has a lot of guts and determination too. He's a good fighter. I like 'Canelo'".

There are those who see Alvarez as a side show attraction, a spoon fed prospect who's been feasting on the remains of fighters who should've retired years ago. There was Carlos Baldomir, Kermit Cintron and the aforementioned Mosley.

On September 15th, he'll be fighting Jose "Josesito" Lopez (30-4, 18 KO's) of Riverside, California. Lopez, 28, bought in to the "Canelo" Alvarez sweepstakes with jaw breaking combinations that defeated Alvarez's original opponent, Victor Ortiz, and put him out of commission.

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Ortiz was supposed to be Alvarez's next big test but Lopez ruined those plans.

Lopez, a natural 140 pound fighter, will now face Alvarez, who'll walk into the ring at a much higher weight than the 154 pounds he'll weigh the previous night.

Lopez is no walk in the park. He's as tough and full of heart as any of the top fighters in the world. Can Lopez win? Yes. Will he have to overcome a huge weight disadvantage? Absolutely. What does this match do for "Canelo" Alvarez? It certainly leaves him open to criticism.

"People aren't dumb. History won't remember his fight," said Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. to [centraldeportiva.com](http://centraldeportiva.com). Chavez, the current W.B.C. middleweight Champion, will be facing Sergio Martinez on the same night Alvarez faces Lopez. "Even if he wins, he'll lose. Because in history, it will be written about how he beat a super lightweight."

Chavez Jr. also happens to be "Canelo" Alvarez's number one competition for the hearts of Mexican boxing fans. The professional rivalry and the dislike for Alvarez has been brewing for a while. Alvarez gets under Chavez's skin. He can't even bear to say his name. He usually refers to Alvarez as "he" when asked about him.

Ironically, it wasn't too long ago that Chavez himself was battling the same issues of credibility. Let's not forget he's 46 fights into his career and the fight vs. Martinez will be his first "big" fight.

And let's not forget that Alvarez is only 22. He's a work in progress that many fans want to see evolve into a fighter with meaningful wins over top competition.

Let's break down the "Canelo" phenomenon.

Mexico is obsessed with boxing. Very few countries have a boxing rich heritage like Mexico.

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Compiling a list of its many world champions and outstanding boxers would take at least a solid hour. Courage and fighting spirit are characteristics highly celebrated through Mexican society. Those two traits helped its people survive the Spanish conquest, the revolution and numerous periods of economic turmoil and civil unrest.

Mexico reveres its top warriors. In many parts of Mexico you'll see statues dedicated to fighters like Salvador Sanchez who represented his country with brilliant wins in fights which many experts predicted he would lose.

Those wins filled Mexicans with pride and hope. It meant success at an international level against the best the world had to offer.

Most Mexicans are a hybrid of European and the native indigenous population. You can see it all over their faces and on their skin. The skin tones vary from pale white to dark brown. The majority being somewhere in the middle.

So it's with little surprise that a red head from Mexico with an entertaining boxing style would cause such a commotion. Redheads make up about 2 percent of the world's population. In Mexico, it's more like .02 percent. The nick name "Canelo" itself, which means cinnamon, is a reference to the color of his hair.

Obviously, the "Canelo" phenomenon is more than just about Alvarez's skills. Juan Manuel Marquez has top notch skills, but unless he's fighting Manny Pacquiao, no one clamors for him like they do for Alvarez.

You have to feel for Marquez who's built a solid career based on great performances against the likes of Pacquiao, Barrera and Katsidis. Can you imagine the kind of career he'd have if he was a redhead with freckles?

If Alvarez wins on Saturday, his career will be carefully moved along by his powerful promoters at Golden Boy Promotions. I suspect a real test is at least two years away.

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In the mean time, the future seems rose colored for "Canelo" Alvarez. More wins will mean much bigger purses than the 1.2 million dollars he'll reportedly make to fight Lopez.

"Canelo" and his promoters at Golden Boy better hope that kid from Riverside doesn't ruin their plans again.

Saul "Canelo" Alvarez vs. Jose "Josesito" Lopez takes place on Saturday September 15 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. It will be broadcast free on The Showtime Network along with Daniel Ponce De Leon taking on Jhonny Gonzalez for the W.B.C. featherweight title, Marcos Maidana taking on Jesus Soto Karass and Leo Santa Cruz against Eric Morel.

Comments or questions for author? Twitter: @fightmedia

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### **deepwater says:**

I cant believe I read this article when the first couple lines were comparing canelo vs chavez heart throbing ability.lol. canelo is only a phenomenon so far because his promotional company hypes him up and pays websites \$\$\$ or gives access to their stable of fighters. he is good but if he didnt have the backing he would be just a good rising prospect.

### **Radam G says:**

So correct is Deepwater. Canelo is quite limited in boxing skills and talent. Danggit! During my career, I should've dyed my hair RED. OOPS! I musta fo'got! Nobody wanted to see a red-headed Pinoy. That jive has only worked for a Mexican with the big money behind him, as Deepwater posted. Red hairs a dime a dozen have come and came. Wow!

I can name a ton of them -- Irish, black, Italian, Russian and German. They all could fight better than Canelo. But they didn't have a billionaire behind them like Canelo has body-fat and super money-fat Carlos Slim behind him. Holla!