*Rios tweaked his tactics and showed an edge in stamina on Saturday night against Alvarado. (Chris Farina-Top Rank)*

Prior to his Saturday night fight against Brandon Rios, I felt that Mike Alvarado's edge in boxing ability would have been the deciding factor between the two "rough and ready" inside specialists. It almost was. After a closely contested first round at the Home Depot Center in Carson, CA, Alvarado began making things easier for himself by implementing his jab to keep Rios on the outside.Using his superior reach, Alvarado peppered the ever advancing Rios with crisp straight lefts and rights. Even at close quarters, as Rios managed to get himself in close, Alvarado seemed to be getting the better of the action there too by replicating the same defensive posture that Richard Abril had success with against Rios --chin tucked in behind a high left shoulder, with the right glove protecting the face from the left hook. Despite the oohs and aahs from the crowd as both were exchanging on the inside, it was Alvarado who was managing to tag Rios almost every time he threw, with his short hooks and uppercuts, whereas apart from the occasionally landed left hook up top and to the body, Rios was finding mostly elbows, shoulders and air. Approaching the midway point, Rios's money punch, his left hook, wasn't landing as much as he'd have liked and it was Alvarado, not Rios,that seemed to be on the verge of taking over the fight.

Then, two things happened that changed matters for good.

The first was Alvarado's early pace and high punch output took its toll. Because Alvarado lacked the foot speed to keep the fight at a distance, he had to rely on throwing punches, and lots of them, to keep Rios from getting in close.Undeterred by Alvarado's power, who himself was now throwing far less minus the earlier conviction, Rios's sustained pressure never wavered as he was now getting beyond the Alvarado jab every time he came forward. After five rounds, Rios was by far the fresher of the two fighters.

The second thing that changed the fight for Rios, and it's something I thought I'd never see from him, was a conscious tactical adjustment he made. With his left hook not landing as much as he'd have liked because of Alvarado's high right glove on the inside, Rios began throwing an overhand right from around the back of Alvarado's raised left shoulder. This is the difference between a fighter who's a natural at using a certain technique and a fighter who's adopted the technique for a certain opponent. When you look at Floyd Mayweather in the same defensive position, his hips are pushing into his opponent's abdomen, he's leaning back with his weight over on his back foot, his chin is tucked away behind his raised left shoulder, and he's constantly slipping, rolling and turning in conjunction with the punches that are being thrown. In this position, Mayweather's almost impossible to hit clean with overhand rights and left hooks. Mike Alvarado, in the same defensive position, had a deficiency to exploit. He did a decent job of protecting himself against the left hook {although Rios began landing it more too as Alvarado slowed down} but because he wasn't leaning back or rolling with the punches, Rios was able to find an opening for his overhand right, the shot that all but ended the fight. Alvarado was going through the defensive motions alright, but because of a flaw in his technique, Rios managed to penetrate his defensive shield.

Hurt by the right and with Alvarado up on the ropes taking too many unanswered blows, the fight was halted in the seventh round.

All in all, I thought it was a brilliant fight that fell just short of being a great. Many seem to think

that the referee deprived us of something truly special but I disagree, wholeheartedly. Alvarado's arms weren't by his waist, but he was clearly defenseless against Rios's onslaught. The official, who's in there for safety precautions first and foremost, got it spot on in my mind.

I'm sure many out there would welcome a rematch between the two, but in all honesty, I see the same thing happening again. Alvarado is clearly the better boxer, but he lacks the power to keep Rios off of him, and the foot speed to outmaneuver him. At 140 pounds, Rios has a vibrancy and energy to him that was clearly wasn't there 135. Rios's physical strength at 140 was my biggest concern with him before the fight. Not any more.

However, while Rios will likely always get the better of Mike Alvarado, or possibly anyone else who remains right in front of him, talks of him being competitive with Manny Pacquiao are ridiculous to say the least. There's a gulf in hand and foot speed that would be too vast for Rios to overcome. Rios, who is a lineal attacker, would not be able to handle Manny's style of fighting --moving in and out at different angles. Pacquiao becomes an apex predator against those who take the fight to him. Rios would end up looking like David Diaz and Antonio Margarito in that one I'm afraid as unlike Alvarado, Pacquiao packs the punch to hurt Rios.

For now though, a win over a very tough opponent in Mike Alvarado, in a candidate for fight of the year honours will suffice.

Nonito Donaire-Toshiaki Nishioka:

This fight was about as far away from the first fight as you could possibly get. From the opening bell, which saw very little thrown as both men were jockeying for position from the outside, the crowd immediately showed their disapproval, unfairly so in my book. Rios-Alvarado was far from an-all time classic, but it was always going to be very hard to top in terms of the ebb and flow of the action that took place earlier. A chess match was the last thing the blood hungry crowd wanted after what they had just witnessed.

It's what they got.

Nevertheless, I felt the fight was enjoyable from a technical perspective. Prior to the bout, the left hook of Nonito Donaire was well documented. From the opening bell, it was apparent that Nishioka had done his homework and believed its hype. The problem here though, was that he seemed to be thinking of nothing else BUT Donaire's left hook. By stepping to his left and away from Donaire's left hand, using a very unconventional guard which saw his lead hand higher than his rear {right glove up by his ear and his left under his chin} Nishioka actually did a good job of negating his opponent's best weapon. It was a very cerebral move from Nishioka, almost Bernard Hopkins-like in it's execution. However, unlike many of Hopkins's past opponents who only had a single weapon and were pretty much ineffective once it was taken away from them, Nishioka found himself in with an opponent in Donaire who's very versatile on offense. Because Donaire seemed to be too dependent on his left hook during his previous three outings, I feel Nishioka felt that if he could take it away, then everything else would fall into place for him --possibly by forcing Donaire into overloading with right hands as a substitute, which would allow for the Japanese southpaw to take a subtle step to his right and fire a straight left as just

as Donaire's missing the target with his right. Unfortunately for him, this never happened. Instead, Donaire kept his composure, remained patient and stuck to boxing his man.

It must have been difficult for Donaire, who, with the crowd on his back demanding more action, and an opponent in front of him who was refusing to give him any, stayed focused and began to systematically break Nishioka down. Had Donaire began loading up with the left hook or any other punch for that matter, then he would have been playing directly into Nishioka's hands. Instead, Donaire attacked sporadically, throwing uppercuts, jabs and straight right hands, from different angles at different targets. With his thought process well and truly cemented on Donaire's left hook, Nishioka found himself losing every round because he wasn't doing anything BUT negate the left hook. I don't think, however, that Nishioka was set up to survive like Omar Narvaez was, as I believe there was always tactical intent behind Nishioka's negativity. As he fell further behind on the scorecards, Nishioka began to attack more, which, as has turned out to be the case with most of Donaire's opponents who opened up against him in the past, proved to be his undoing. Not long after being sent down by a lead hand uppercut,Nishioka uncharacteristically followed his man blind to the ropes where he lead off with a jab, only for Donaire to counter simultaneously and drop Nishioka again with a straight right hand. Not only is Donaire a superb athlete, he's also an astute tactician and knows how to set a trap in there. Moments later, Nishioka was saved from any further punishment when his corner intervened. With the ninth round TKO victory, Nonito Donaire became the new universally recognized super bantamweight champion of the world.

It's the same old scenario with Donaire. Against opponents who take chances on offense, he has the quick trigger punching ability to end a fight with a single punch. There aren't many true one punch knockout artists left in boxing. Nonito Donaire is among the last of a dying breed.

In terms of future opponents, Donaire has plenty of options. For the hardcore among us, two fighters come to mind. Guillermo Rigondeaux is an obvious choice, who, with his counterpunching ability and exquisite technique, wouldn't leave many openings for Donaire to expose, which could possibly lead to a fight with plenty of feinting and not enough punching. I'm not sure Donaire will want to go down that avenue again anytime soon. Likewise with Anselmo Moreno, a defensive specialist who I consider to be the best pure technician in boxing at the moment. That fight would surely please the aficionados, but I'm not sure it would quench the thirsts of those who prefer their action of the Mike Alvarado-Brandon Rios kind.

The most crowd pleasing fight for Donaire right now would be the high volume and exciting Abner Mares. But as we know, there are ongoing promotional issues that exist which could prevent it from taking place, as well as Mares's tough November date with Anselmo Moreno himself.

Whomever Nonito Donaire decides to fight next, I'll be watching.

Out of all the upper echelon fighters in boxing, you could say that Donaire is the most complete, who at the same time, doesn't jeopardize his offense to aid his defense or vice versa. Mayweather and Ward are tough to hit and are expert tacticians, but you're not going to see many knockouts from them. Pacquiao and Martinez are sensational on offense, but if they were

to be marked on defense alone, they'd be nowhere near the top of the mythical pound for pound rankings.

That's why I like Donaire. He's got good defense, great offense, speed, power, ring intelligence and he can press the attack or can lay back and counter --he's the complete fighter. If Donaire managed to not only secure fights with the likes of Mares, Moreno and Rigondeaux, but actually beat them too, then Mayweather, Ward, Pacquiao and co. would have some serious competition on their hands.

Comment on this article

**Radam G says:**

Nice piece! But I'm not feeling those run-together words. Danggit! I heard of run-on sentences. But this apparently news way of cyberspace scribing is fudging with my membrane, causing to be insane. I need some sugarcane. In otherwords, something to hype me up in separating those typed-together words, so I can get my read on. Hehehe! Holla!

**ali says:**

Donaire is just as skilled as Ward and Mayweather

**deepwater says:**

great fight. not = to gatti ward though. alvarado used the philly crab shell pretty good and rios showed what it takes to beat the philly crab. rios vs mayweather? rios can take mayweathers shots then what happens? and to all the suckers on here that was glad 50 cent the government witness rat fink got involved in boxing what say you now?

**MARK LENNOX says:**

Radam and Deepwater must share the same suger cane.he, he, he.

**deepwater says:**

[QUOTE=MARK LENNOX;21101]Radam and Deepwater must share the same suger cane.he, he, he.[/QUOTE]

haha some guys know the fight game other guys dont know shyt. which one are you?

**amayseng says:**

rios has not done one thing in his career to impress me...

this was a good brawl because it was wild and back and forth but it had NOTHING

on ward--- gatti, those two guys were skilled and technical fighters, rios just walks in a

straight line, trying to lean and lay on you and wear you down with thudding punches with no defense or head movement.....

in fact i hope they make pacman rios, because i would bet that pac knocks rios out

in the first round...i would put money on it...

**SouthPaul says:**

His effort and love for what he does is impressive but you're pretty much spot on. Rios will get zapped out against a deadly puncher.

**ali says:**

[QUOTE=deepwater;21096]great fight. not = to gatti ward though. alvarado used the philly crab shell pretty good and rios showed what it takes to beat the philly crab. rios vs mayweather? rios can take mayweathers shots then what happens? and to all the suckers on here that was glad 50 cent the government witness rat fink got involved in boxing what say you now?[/QUOTE]
Rios vs Mayweather is a flat out mismatch he has a much better chance against Broner Arum ain't crazy

**deepwater says:**

[QUOTE=ali;21107]Rios vs Mayweather is a flat out mismatch he has a much better chance against Broner Arum ain't crazy[/QUOTE]

would broner fight rios? Bob Arum is a greedy liar but he isnt crazy. lets do some math. rios vs broner how much would each guy make? guess is 1 million each give or take.. rios vs mayweather ( rios vs pac which is easier since arum hiolds the cards)30 mill for floyd 5 mill for rios. rios will not have a long career with his style. which is it rios vs pac or floyd for 5 million for rios will make $$ sense to arum.

**SouthPaul says:**

Broner got what it takes to beat the fight out of Rios but the promoters involved ain't letting it happen. They're both at fault but it's Floyd and Oscar who truly kicked off the beefing. Those two ingrates are the root of the problems. One spoiled ..the other a cross dressing coke head. Nuff said.

**ali says:**

[QUOTE=deepwater;21108]would broner fight rios? Bob Arum is a greedy liar but he isnt crazy.

lets do some math. rios vs broner how much would each guy make? guess is 1 million each give or take.. rios vs mayweather ( rios vs pac which is easier since arum hiolds the cards)30 mill for floyd 5 mill for rios. rios will not have a long career with his style. which is it rios vs pac or floyd for 5 million for rios will make $$ sense to arum.[/QUOTE]
Agreed

**Radam G says:**

The fight that should be made is Tim Bradley against Bam Bam. Bam Bam would slam slam dat @$$ in a good interstate war for about six rounds in which TB will be KTFO! Holla!

**deepwater says:**

[QUOTE=Radam G;21114]The fight that should be made is Tim Bradley against Bam Bam. Bam Bam would slam slam dat @$$ in a good interstate war for about six rounds in which TB will be KTFO! Holla![/QUOTE]

tim bradley can only sell 6 tickets, arum might punish him for saying his foot is fine even though arum said his foot was hurt. bradley thought he would be an instant billonaire after the robbery of pacman .

**SouthPaul says:**

[QUOTE=Radam G;21114]The fight that should be made is Tim Bradley against Bam Bam. Bam Bam would slam slam dat @$$ in a good interstate war for about six rounds in which TB will be KTFO! Holla![/QUOTE]

You're letting the Robert Garcia Filipino Flash connection distract your better judgment. I give Rios a punchers chance cause he can bang and he's got heart but I wouldn't go betting the Radam savings on the ktfo bet.

**Radam G says:**

The Cali Cranium Crusher only has a giant-@$$ dome chance, because Bam Bam would poke holes into dat muscle-bound torso. And we all know that the big-foot of pugilism has fudged-up wheels now. Bradley's dogs are still barking, so he won't be fighting again until next year. Hehe!

WTF! I never heard of a sore-footed "Big foot" disappearing from the scene because his giant-arse dogs are still bytch barking. I'll bet my distant cousin's house on Bam Bam whuppin' Big-footed Bambi's @ss's.

I don't like that unforgivable-owing-me--some-money cousin anyway. Haha! Holla!

**ali says:**

[QUOTE=Radam G;21114]The fight that should be made is Tim Bradley against Bam Bam.

Bam Bam would slam slam dat @$$ in a good interstate war for about six rounds in which TB will be KTFO! Holla![/QUOTE]
I actually agree with your post I think Rios would eventually catch up Bradley like he did Alvarado that ni*-a has no power.

**ali says:**

[QUOTE=deepwater;21115]tim bradley can only sell 6 tickets, arum might punish him for saying his foot is fine even though arum said his foot was hurt. bradley thought he would be an instant billonaire after the robbery of pacman .[/QUOTE]
Stop saying he can't sell tickets!!! I know he couldn't before Pac but once u fight a superstar things change. Let's see how many ppl show up to his next fight then judge him.

**SouthPaul says:**

Agreed, with effort and a good undercard the Bradley rematch woulda' done outstanding numbers. Top Rank is being lazy and spiteful that's why they went with a tired fourth bout with JMM. I'm also tired of Manny's scripted politician like responses regarding who he'd like to fight. Always doing the I'll leave it up to my promoters and managers. He's grating my nerves with that nonsense. Bring back the gambling degenerate...San Miguel drinking ... Chain smoking... pool hall dwelling Manny Pacquiao. He was more exciting.

**Mr. Lex Luthor says:**

Mayweather would never waste his time and money on Rios. Rios doesn't bring the following to warrant a fight with the biggest draw in the sport. Also, we all know Floyd and Top Rank aren't going to sit down at the negotiating table. Furthermore and Finally, Rios doesn't deserve to be in the ring with Mayweather. It is ridiculous to classify his match with Alvarado as anything but a glorified Toughman exhibition. Floyd would destroy him but he would stand a punchers chance against the Pac-man because neither one of them is concerned with defense. It is called the sweet SCIENCE for a reason.

**ali says:**

[QUOTE=SouthPaul;21127]Agreed, with effort and a good undercard the Bradley rematch woulda' done outstanding numbers. Top Rank is being lazy and spiteful that's why they went with a tired fourth bout with JMM. I'm also tired of Manny's scripted politician like responses regarding who he'd like to fight. Always doing the I'll leave it up to my promoters and managers. He's grating my nerves with that nonsense. Bring back the gambling degenerate...San Miguel drinking ... Chain smoking... pool hall dwelling Manny Pacquiao. He was more exciting.[/QUOTE]

Gambling degenerate San Miguel drinking chain smoking pool hall dwelling. Manny Pac..hilarious

**Radam G says:**

You'd be ditto about gambling and dwelling. But straight zero about chain smoking. Now chain whoring? That too! Haha! But only smoking arse in dat squared jungle. Now taggin @$$es of dames, damsels and dolls, that too. Hehe! Of course SCLA Ali gets da shyts about any negativity about Da Manny. But the South Central LA cat is up with any negative jive snot that Money May blows, and tries to clean it up. Nasty muthafudger! Hehe!

YUP! Call out the vices of Money May, and those MM groupies, nuthuggers, shoe lickers, pied-piper flute-listening rat marchers and small-cojones guy floozies lose their peaminds. Holla!

**SouthPaul says:**

Lmao. Just giving Manny grief. I still got love for him.

**ali says:**

[QUOTE=Radam G;21136]You'd be ditto about gambling and dwelling. But straight zero about chain smoking. Now chain whoring? That too! Haha! But only smoking arse in dat squared jungle. Now taggin @$$es of dames, damsels and dolls, that too. Hehe! Of course SCLA Ali gets da shyts about any negativity about Da Manny. But the South Central LA cat is up with any negative jive snot that Money May blows, and tries to clean it up. Nasty muthafudger! Hehe!

YUP! Call out the vices of Money May, and those MM groupies, nuthuggers, shoe lickers, pied-piper flute-listening rat marchers and small-cojones guy floozies lose their peaminds. Holla![/QUOTE]
Keep it real that sh*t was funny..