Written by David A. Avila
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*You never know which Fernando "Cochulito" Montiel will show up.*Sure, recently he's been fighting more aggressively and with more knockout intention. But now he's facing an opponent that is actually favored to beat him.

"I changed my style and became more aggressive. I wanted to give people a better show, a better fight. I think I have done that," said Montiel. "My style is better and it has shown in my fights."

Will he keep that aggressiveness against Nonito "Filipino Flash" Donaire?

WBO and WBC titleholder Montiel (44-2-2, 34 KOs) seeks to prove that his 44 magnum style is for real and he will use it against fellow pound for pound member Donaire (25-1, 17 KOs) when they meet on Saturday at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino. HBO will televise.

Of course Donaire packs a magnum too.

Long ago Montiel was a Mexican gunslinger who looked to end fights dramatically after displaying his dexterity and speed in the ring. It was common to see the Los Mochis boxer befuddle then blast opponents out of there with the finality of a TNT blast.

It was the year 2000 when Montiel manhandled the WBO flyweight champion Isidro "Chino" Garcia before stopping him. Garcia was a quicksilver boxer with great skills but he was flattened by Montiel. That was his introduction to the boxing world and his first world title.

In 2002 Montiel moved up in weight and defeated Panama's undefeated Pedro Alcazar for the WBO junior bantamweight with a withering battering attack. The Mexican fighter showed no mercy in hitting the Panamanian from all angles until the fight was stopped in the sixth round. A few days later Alcazar died.

Death in the ring is a constant possibility for professional boxers. Every year a number of prizefighters die from injuries endured. The winners of those fights often suffer some kind of mental block that subtly appears in their fighting style. Maybe they don't fire the combinations as fluidly or with some fighters the aggressiveness is gone. Montiel seemed to change after Alcazar died.

"We all face danger," said Montiel, 31.

Four years passed and though Montiel motored along winning almost all of his fights by utilizing his speed and skill, something was missing. Then he decided to move up in weight again to fight fellow Mexican Jhonny Gonzalez long arms and all for the WBO bantamweight title in 2006. It was a disastrous showing for Montiel as fans booed the lack of action and most blamed him as he lost by split decision.

That killer instinct that had made him unique was absent. He was cut loose by his former promoters.

That sparked something in Montiel.

After signing with Top Rank, Montiel reverted back to his old style of seek and destroy. But few realized it until he met Colombia's hard hitting Luis Melendez in Las Vegas. That night both fighters were knocked down with Montiel finally ending the Colombian's night in the 12th and final round.

Montiel was back to form and just last year grabbed the WBO title against Ciso Morales and the WBC against Japan's talented Hozumi Hasegawa by knockout. Those two wins launched him into the pound for pound rankings.

Nonito

Donaire, 28, is also ranked in the pound for pound rankings. When he dismantled seemingly indestructible Vic "The Destroyer" Darchinyan with a single punch in July 2007 the boxing world was in shock. Since then Donaire has fought seven foes and only one escaped the knockout.

"I don't expect this fight to go the distance," said Donaire, a remarkably eloquent speaker who resembles a choir boy, not a deadly puncher. "Whoever makes a mistake will lose."

For years Donaire sought out a marquee opponent to match wits and strength and it looked like it might never happen. A move up in weight to the 118-pound bantamweight division helped develop this showdown.

Donaire has dreams of becoming the first undisputed world champion of Asian extraction. He needs to beat Montiel to accomplish that goal.

"Definitely experience and his ability to adapt to certain things is one of his strong points," said Donaire, comparing Montiel's strength with his own. "If he feels he has to do something different he can be versatile. He has a tremendous body punch. I think in terms of strength I have it. I think I faced enough good guys. He has a good punch but I also have that."

Montiel seeks to prove he can still win a firefight regardless of the danger.

"You have to fight smart but I am here to entertain too. I want people to go in there and say that

is a fight that they will remember for a long time," Montiel said.

Fights on television

Fri. ESPN2, 6 p.m., Fernando Guerrero (20-0) vs. Derrick Findley (17-4).

Fri. Telefutura, 11:30 p.m., Mercito Gesta (20-0-1) vs. Genaro Trazancos (22-13-1).

Sat. Televisa, 8:30 p.m., Rocky Juarez (28-7-1) vs. Alejandro Sanabria (26-1-1).

Sat. HBO, 9:45 p.m., Fernando Montiel (44-2-2) vs. Nonito Donaire (25-1).

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Montiel may be the da man of many faces. But he probably won't have enough defense to protect himself from the punching pain of the Filipino Flash. Da Filipino Flash is gonna be gettin' on his dash. Into Montiel's many faces, those Filipino Flash punches are gonna be gettin' on their crash and smash. Montiel's many faces are going to look as if they have been hit with a Pinoy whip lash. Hahahahahahaha! I'm just expressing Pinoy PRIDE! Don't start roaring like an angry ocean tide. With your own peeps pride just ride. Holla!

the Roast says:

Mango by KO!