

If Arturo Gatti Fights Floyd Mayweather

Written by Matthew Aguilar
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Arturo Gatti looked mighty impressive last Saturday, using his newfound boxing skills to dominate Jesse James Leija for a fifth round knockout in Atlantic City. The win vaulted Gatti into the biggest payday of his life, an expected June showdown with two time champion Floyd Mayweather in the first pay per view outing for either fighter.

It will be one of the most anticipated fights of 2005, and a classic boxer puncher matchup.

Once “Thunder” and “Pretty Boy” Floyd get in the ring together, however, Gatti might wonder why he polished all those boxing skills just to take a beating.

If there is one boxing axiom that usually holds true, it's that speed kills. When you pit two otherwise evenly matched opponents, the guy with the quicker hands wins. And nobody in the game today has quicker hands than Mayweather, who is considered by many one of the top two pound for pound fighters in boxing.

In other words, Gatti is in for the kind of beating that marked his early career.

Here are six examples of what Mayweather Gatti will look like come June.

1. Floyd Mayweather KO 10 Diego Corrales, Jan. 20, 2001 - Why not start with Mayweather himself? Going in, Corrales was given a serious shot at putting the first blemish on Pretty Boy Floyd's pristine record. He was tall, undefeated and powerful, a 130 pound version of Thomas Hearns. If he could get Mayweather at the end of his long jab, the experts figured, Corrales could then measure Mayweather for his huge left hook. One problem was that, at the time, Corrales wasn't much of a jabber. The second problem was that Corrales had no way of anticipating the speed with which Mayweather would unleash his punches. And so all Corrales could do was take punch after punch. He'd get knocked down, and get back up, but after the first few rounds, there was a sense that “Chico” was in way over his head. It was finally stopped in the 10th.

2. Pernell Whitaker W 12 Jose Luis Ramirez, Aug. 20, 1989 - Their first fight, fought 17 months earlier, was generally regarded as the worst decision of 1988. Whitaker dominated with his awkward southpaw style and speed, but Ramirez somehow got the decision and held onto his WBC lightweight title. And though the decision was a total rip-off, “Sweet Pea” was perhaps more cautious than he needed to be. And so the judges found the loophole they needed to give Ramirez the nod. In the rematch, the Norfolk, Virginia native realized his mistake and fought with purpose. If Ramirez landed a punch, it certainly wasn't visible to the naked eye. Whitaker was absolutely blazing on that day and his speed made the veteran Ramirez look like a novice. Whether he was countering or leading, Whitaker couldn't miss, and Ramirez had no way of retaliating. The decision was a formality.

3. Sugar Ray Leonard KO 8 Roberto Duran, Nov. 25, 1980 - We all know about this one,

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when Duran uttered the infamous words “no mas,” turned his back and quit – giving up his WBC welterweight title in the process. There really shouldn’t be any mystery as to why the Panamanian legend gave up, however. He was utterly and completely frustrated by Sugar Ray’s furious combinations. He was horribly out of shape, but, really, that didn’t matter. Leonard was so sharp, he would have likely dominated a prime time Duran. The feared “Manos de Piedra,” perhaps the greatest lightweight of all time, was reduced to an unsure, one dimensional brawler because of Leonard’s quickness. Duran would move in and Leonard would dance out of trouble. Leonard would fire combinations from the outside, and then move out of danger – leaving Duran swinging at air. It was one of the greatest performances in boxing history, and perhaps the best example of speed turning an otherwise competitive fight into a blowout.

4. Meldrick Taylor KO 12 Buddy McGirt, Sept. 3, 1988 - How good was Taylor on this day? Well, consider that McGirt went on to defeat Simon Brown – at the time one of the best fighters in boxing – three years later. Taylor, though, was one of the fastest fighters in boxing history, and he went right at McGirt. The defending IBF junior welterweight champ hung in there as long as he could, but was soon overwhelmed by Taylor’s superior physical talent and work rate. Taylor may well have won every round with three, four, five and six punch combinations. In the end, a defenseless McGirt had to be saved by his cornermen in the final round. In another example of speed overcoming power and talent, Taylor went on to dominate the great Julio Cesar Chavez two years later. For 11 rounds, 2 minutes and 58 seconds....

5. James Toney KO 9 Iran Barkley, Feb. 13, 1993 - Barkley had just won the IBF super middleweight title with his second surprise over Thomas Hearns. Toney, a former IBF middleweight champ, hadn’t looked himself through almost all of 1992, and some wondered whether he was strong enough to compete with the physically imposing “Blade.” All questions concerning who would win this one were answered in the opening round, when Barkley would punch and miss, and Toney would retaliate with blistering three and four punch combinations. This went on the whole fight, and it didn’t matter where the battle was waged: in center ring, against the ropes or in the corners. Simply, Toney was counterpunching Barkley to death. At the end, when Barkley trainer Eddie Mustafa Muhammad stopped the fight in the 9th round, the veteran’s face was a mangled mess.

6. Oscar De La Hoya KO 2 Rafael Ruelas, May 5, 1995 - Ten years ago, De La Hoya was still a skinny lightweight with big time hand and foot speed and ferocious power to go along with it. Still, he was on the green side when he challenged IBF champ Ruelas, and the fight was considered a pick ‘em. But it was obvious from the beginning that Ruelas couldn’t deal with De La Hoya’s hand speed and boxing ability. Ruelas’ clumsy rushes were met with deadly counterpunches. In round two, a combination capped off by a left hook put Ruelas on the deck, and De La Hoya finished it seconds later. It still may be De La Hoya’s best ever performance.

As improved as Gatti's skills appear to be, there is little he can do about the discrepancy in physical talent between him and Mayweather. Gatti’s best chance would probably be to ditch the boxing skills and return to his aggressive roots, hoping and praying his skin holds up and his power bails him out.

Otherwise, history dictates that Mayweather-Gatti is a superfight that will turn into a super rout.