

## Margarito Catches a Killer

Written by Joey Knish  
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Saturday night in Las Vegas, Antonio Margarito caught Kermit “Killer” Cintron with nearly everything he threw at him, while putting on a tactical display of timely offense coupled with disciplined defense. The Tijuana native broke down the previously undefeated Cintron with a painful lesson in combination power punching that completely befuddled and frustrated his opponent. In less than five rounds the newly crowned WBO welterweight champion had bloodied, battered and beaten the Puerto Rican Cintron until he had extracted his will to continue.

Many pre-fight experts and bettors alike called for Cintron to graduate on this night, while others counted on Margarito’s edge in experience to be a key factor in the fight. Those favoring experience were right on the mark, but it was so much more.

Antonio Margarito displayed precision punching packed with bad intentions as he proved that a knockout artist can often go out on his shield a victim of his own strengths. “Tony” tamed “The Killer” Cintron – now 24-1 with 22 knockouts – by using Cintron’s aggression against him by counterpunching and playing solid defense, catching most of his opponent’s volleys with his gloves held high. The fight was likely Margarito’s finest showing as a professional and gave notice that, at his best, he may not be beaten.

Critics looking to take something away from the performance this weekend may table the argument that Kermit Cintron was being rushed and taking on too much too soon. However, the 25-year old was coming off big knockout victories over current NABF 147-pound champion Teddy Reid and former title challenger Elio Ortiz. Margarito was the next logical step up for Cintron, and one hopes he learned a valuable lesson on this night and will come back stronger than ever. The native of Puerto Rico was near tears after defeat, an emotional release of his frustrations in the ring. Margarito put on a boxing clinic using tight defense and angles to keep Cintron off guard each round. In addition to blocking most of Cintron’s powerful punches with his gloves, the return assault was precise and Cintron was reduced to guessing.

On this night Antonio Margarito looked as good as he ever has. Similar to the way he picked apart and disposed of hard-hitting Andrew “Six Heads” Lewis in February, 2002 in fewer than six minutes, Margarito was devastatingly strong and accurate Saturday night. Throwing combinations of all varieties at first had Cintron confused, and after three more rounds of punishment he was completely dazed. If it wasn’t solid left jabs followed by hard rights it was a serving of piercing uppercuts rattling Cintron’s cranium or Margarito digging to his liver.

The first sign that it might be a short night was in the third round when “The Killer” was cut over his right eye. The blood trickled into his eye and was a problem for the remainder of the bout, as Margarito sensed his opponent was wounded yet still dangerous. Margarito’s calculated assault continued in the fourth, landing snot-rocking uppercuts and crisp right hands. Before long Cintron was down . . . and then down again. The one-sided boxing lesson was mercifully terminated after Cintron touched the canvas twice more on unsteady legs in the fifth and final

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round and the corner correctly stepped in to preserve their fighter. In the end, Margarito was too much for Cintron at this stage, and perhaps always will be. While many point to Cintron's youth (25-years-old) as a factor, keep in mind that Antonio Margarito is a mere 27-years-old himself, but is well-seasoned with championship experience.

So where does "Tony" Margarito go from here? Options seemingly abound.

On the night's undercard, Shane Mosley used an effective body attack to take much of the steam out of David Estrada's train. Estrada was game although limited in what he offered as opposition, but he was tough as nails and made Mosley, returning to welterweight after four bouts at 154-pounds, work for every point in each round. Because of what we have seen of Mosley in the past at 147, he has to be considered a threat to Margarito. Based on Sugar's recent 2-4-1 record one has to tip the Mexican if they met.

Zab Judah is in the most fortuitous position of being able to accessorize with either the WBA, WBC or IBF belt. With a gold smile to match, Judah now has enough "bling-bling" to match his bravado, but the disciplined Margarito is very capable of wiping away the Brooklyn, New York fighter's permanent smirk, and take all the belts at the same time. At 147-pounds Margarito is the better boxer of the two, would be the bigger man in the ring, and looks more effective than ever at taking the air out of blown-up power punchers.

Oscar De La Hoya continues to make wind that a return to the welterweight division is in his future, but until that happens, it is merely hot air. And if we are looking for hot air we can refer back to the aforementioned Judah. Certainly Kermit Cintron will remain a force in the division and Cory Spinks is the type of slick southpaw who can still be a factor in the division.

For now, Antonio Margarito seems ready, willing and more than able to defeat any challenger that comes his way. The way he fought last weekend in Las Vegas was downright frightening . . . for his next opponent.