Written by Matthew Aguilar
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What is past is prologue.

It was 10 years ago this weekend that Roy Jones Jr. put on a virtuoso performance against Vinny Pazienza – a fighter that probably didn't belong in the same ring as the then-super middleweight king.

It was a pay-per-view extravaganza that was intriguing to most casual boxing fans because of Pazienza's popularity – but a mismatch to hardcore fight aficionados who knew of Jones' ability.

Pazienza was stopped in the sixth round after landing fewer than 10 clean punches all night.

Fast forward a decade, in the same Atlantic City ring, and boxing fans saw a virtual instant replay of Jones-Pazienza – right down to the round.

Floyd Mayweather, in a performance that demands he be called the best fighter on the planet, brutalized poor Arturo Gatti at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City Saturday. He knocked him down in the first round, and proceeded to land at a connect percentage of 57 percent before Gatti trainer Buddy McGirt mercifully stopped the massacre after the sixth round.

In the corner between rounds six and seven, Gatti was overcome by pain. His left eye was bulging out like a tomato, his body had been battered with vicious combinations, and his head was ringing after absorbing punch after punch from a fighter who may just be the best practitioner of his generation.

Before the fight, Mayweather said "Thunder and Lightning" pitted an A-plus fighter against a C-plus fighter. He may have been right – though he was less brash after the brilliant performance that earned him Gatti's WBC super lightweight strap.

"I respect Arturo Gatti," Mayweather told HBO's Larry Merchant. "He's a tough guy. But tonight I was the better man. I'm just glad he gave me the opportunity. He's still tough. He can still be a world champion again. He's Arturo 'Thunder' Gatti, and I appreciate his fans for letting me fight here. He's a great champion and I'm a great champion."

A great champion who will never be questioned again.

The domination started in the very first round, when Mayweather, 33-0 (22 knockouts), began connecting with his rat-a-tat-tat combinations. At the end of the frame, Mayweather dropped Gatti with a left hook after what appeared to be a break called by referee Earl Morton.

Gatti, 39-6 (30 KOs), had his gloves at his sides when he was nailed by Mayweather, and later admitted that it was his mistake for not protecting himself.

Mayweather, savvy and angry, simply jumped on an advantage.

It only got worse for Gatti after that.

Mayweather absolutely could not miss, tagging Gatti again and again with left hooks, right hands, jabs, body shots – all in gaudy combination. “Pretty Boy” Floyd unloaded his entire arsenal on Gatti, and never, ever appeared to be anything less than overwhelming.

By the end of the second round, Gatti had been completely neutralized by Mayweather’s ungodly speed. Thunder was reluctant to punch, because every time he did, he was met with a five or six punch counter combination that had him wondering what he was thinking when he took this fight.

Mayweather saw Gatti’s offense coming from a mile away. The proud New Jersey-based Canadian landed perhaps a couple of body punches all night long.

Pretty Boy began digging to the body in the fourth, and the end was near. At one point, Mayweather landed three consecutive right hands.

Gatti had no answer.

By the sixth, the fight had turned ugly. Gatti was being destroyed. And it was hard to watch.

Gatti’s left eye was closed shut as a result of Mayweather’s rapid-fire right hands. He was in pain when he returned to his corner after the sixth. And McGirt knew it.

And, thank God, he stopped it.

Final PunchStat numbers: Mayweather landed 57 percent of his punches to Gatti’s 17 percent. Pretty Boy’s power punches landed at 63 percent. Gatti, 18 percent.

Domination.

“I was trying to headhunt too much,” Gatti said. “He was hard to hit and much quicker than I thought he would be. He’s very good.”

Understatement of the millennium.

With recognized junior welterweight king Ricky Hatton watching from ringside, it appears the Englishman is the only fighter in the division capable of providing Mayweather with any competition.

As strong as he is, however, you have to wonder how the “Hitman” would handle Mayweather’s speed.

Miguel Cotto was at ringside, too, probably wishing he hadn’t witnessed Mayweather in person.

He’s not ready for a fighter like Mayweather now. He may never be.

A fighter who took himself out of the Mayweather sweepstakes was Vivian Harris, who fought like an amateur in losing his WBA junior welterweight title to unheralded Carlos Maussa.

Harris, 25-2-1 (17 K’s), was dropped by a single, devastating left hook at 43 seconds of the seventh round after what had been an entertaining-if-flawed fight. And though Maussa, 19-2, should have been disqualified by incompetent referee John Stewart after landing a punch as Harris lay on the canvas, he is the new champion.

As unspectacular as he is.

At least Harris was honest about his loss.

“I blew it,” Harris said.

In other undercard action, Puerto Rico’s Ivan Calderon, 22-0 (15 KO’s), defended his WBO minimumweight title against Mexico’s young Gerardo Verde (13-1 (10 KO’s) via unanimous 12-round decision.

And Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., 20-0 (15 KOs), continued his winning ways, stopping outmatched Ruben Galvan, 21-7 (9 KOs) in the fourth round.