

Stoppage City: Cotto, Margarito Win In AC

Written by Ron Borges
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ATLANTIC CITY – It was a night of mismatches and threats Saturday at Boardwalk Hall.

Both WBA welterweight champion Miguel Cotto and former WBO champion Antonio Margarito made short work of the men who tried to stand between them and a long awaited July 26 showdown and each ended up the same way – badly bruised and finished before the end of six rounds.

Predictably, the undefeated Cotto (32-0, 26 KO) easily punched holes in the defenses of former “Contender” star Alfonso Gomez, closing his right eye and dropping him three times before the fight was stopped by referee Randy Neumann on the advice of the ringside physician at the end of the fifth round.

By then Gomez had proven his gameness and Cotto his superiority in a fight so one-sided there is really nothing to say but it’s good that it’s over.

“That was a real beating in there,” said Cotto’s uncle and chief second Evangelista Cotto. “You’re always concerned before a fight but in this case we knew we had the superior fighter.”

Gomez (18-4-2, 8 KO) fought gamely but had no chance to hold off the far stronger, much faster and vastly more talented Cotto, who according to Compubox statistics hit Gomez three times for every punch Gomez landed. That is seldom anything more than an early exit strategy, as it mercifully turned out to be less than an hour after Margarito had won the IBF welterweight title by stopping champion Kermit Cintron at 1:57 of the sixth round in a fight nearly as non-competitive as what would follow.

For his part, Cintron should have worried more about Margarito and less about Earl Brown, since it was the former who was doing him wrong, not the latter, despite his repeated complaints to the referee. The soon-to-be ex-IBF welterweight champion complained bitterly to Brown about the former WBO champion hitting him behind the head, which was happening primarily because Cintron kept turning his head after being hit on it with the first of Margarito’s endless combinations. This persisted for 5 ½ grinding, grueling rounds, each of which seemed to go worse and worse for Cintron, just as they had when the two first met three years ago, until he was finally felled by a stinging left uppercut to the body.

Cintron, by then battered and bloody, dropped to his hands and knees, his chin hanging low as Brown counted him out at 1:57 of Round 6 before he could push himself up for more abuse. He never bothered to even raise his head. Frankly, what would have been the point?

“My hands were up high and he hit me with a left uppercut to the body and I couldn’t breath,” Cintron said later. “I should have boxed more. I should have stayed on the outside but I had something to prove.”

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It's hard to know what that was because Cintron's abandonment of a left jab that won him the opening round allowed Margarito to move easily inside, a place where all the advantages were his, and once there Cintron had no ability to force him backwards.

By the time Cintron went down it was clear he had nothing to keep the bigger man off him, and it was equally apparent that he could not match his power when they traded on the inside. Unwisely, that was eventually where Cintron chose to make his stand. He didn't stand there for long.

Margarito (36-5, 26 KO) repeatedly walked through the fire coming at him, even when Cintron nailed him flush with several short right uppercuts that snapped his head back as if it were on a string early in the fight. Although those punches could not have gone unnoticed they had no apparent effect on Margarito and did nothing to dissuade him from applying the nearly constant pressure that eventually drove Cintron to his knees.

"I learned from the Paul Williams fight (when he lost his WBO title) that I had to put pressure on him right away," Margarito said. "I had the fight from the beginning. I was surprised it lasted that long."

Margarito proved quickly that he could take the big right hands that had made Cintron (29-2, 27 KO) a champion only 18 months after his first loss to Margarito. Once he did it showed that his pre-fight boast that this would merely be a re-run of what transpired at Caesars Palace three years ago, when he stopped Cintron in five similarly one-sided rounds, was no idle threat. It was a promise, not a prediction.

By the second round Margarito had begun the process of cutting Cintron down, consistently walking through the best he had to offer and pounding away at him on the inside like a lumberjack working on a small fir tree. It didn't take long to cut it down.

The same may not be the case with the man he'll face next – Miguel Cotto.