

Experts Weigh In: 13/15 Say Cotto Wins

Written by Robert Mladinich
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It is impossible to not be excited about Saturday night's welterweight showdown between Miguel Cotto, 32-0 (26 KOS), of Caguas, Puerto Rico, and Antonio Margarito, 36-5 (26 KOS), of Tijuana, Mexico.

The 27-year-old Cotto, who holds the WBA title, is not only one of the best fighters in the world, he is also one of the most exciting. He has already beaten a veritable who's who of champions and contenders, but will face his toughest challenger against the taller and equally aggressive 30-year-old Margarito, the IBF titlist whose 5'11 height makes him four inches taller than Cotto.

(Margarito's title is not on the line in this bout).

The fight is being held at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, and will be televised on HBO Pay-Per-View. There has been a tremendous buzz on the streets and among boxing insiders about this terrific matchup, which will undoubtedly be a candidate for Fight of the Year, maybe even Fight of the Decade.

Here's what a random list of 15 boxing insiders had to say:

Nick Charles, ShoBox commentator: "I'd love to see both guys get off the floor, but I think this fight will be more tactical than most people expect. I don't know if Cotto is going to want to take too many chances with this guy. It's so easy to root for both of these guys, but I have to go with Cotto winning a close and competitive decision." Cotto W 12.

Steve Farhood, ShoBox commentator: "I like Cotto. I think Margarito will make him look better than ever. Every opponent Cotto has faced is placed in the role of a boxer. Not Margarito. He'll push, and Cotto will shine. Cotto is a far better boxer. If he can outbox Shane Mosley, he'll certainly do the same to Margarito. With all that said, given Margarito's strength and determination, this can't be anything less than a great fight." Cotto W 12.

Gerry Cooney, former heavyweight title challenger: "Cotto is still on his way up, while Margarito might be on his way down. It's really hard to beat Cotto unless you swarm him, but it's tough to do that against him. Margarito's good, but I think Cotto is a little younger and a little fresher and should stop Margarito around the eighth or ninth round." Cotto by stoppage.

Iran Barkley, former multi-division champion: "Top Rank has put Cotto in a lot of tough fights, so he is really experienced at a young age. There is going to be a lot of give and take, but Cotto will stop Margarito. For such a young guy, he's already seen a lot and is a great fighter." Cotto by stoppage.

Bobby Cassidy Sr., perennial light heavyweight contender in the 1970s: "I like Margarito by KO. He's a really vicious fighter, who reminds me of a young Roberto Duran. What he did to Kermit Cintron (twice) was unbelievable. Cotto could outbox him, but Margarito is such a workman and

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he's very busy inside. Margarito is a 2 1/2 -1 underdog. That's unbelievable to me. I say he stops Cotto in the middle rounds." Margarito by stoppage.

James Moore, Irish junior middleweight prospect: "Joshua Clottey did really well against Margarito for about four rounds until he injured himself. He showed that he can be outboxed. I think that there will be a lot of big bombs thrown, but Cotto will score a knockout around the eighth round." Cotto by stoppage

Don Elbaum, boxing promoter, manager, dinosaur: "Wow, what a fight! Both guys will look like a million dollars for as long as it lasts. The word great is so overused today, but Cotto is a great fighter. He would be great in any era. He might stop Margarito in the first round or with 11 seconds left in the fight, but I think he will stop him. Then I'd love to see Cotto vs. De La Hoya in Yankee Stadium before it closes. They'd sell that place out." Cotto by stoppage.

Bruce Silverglade, owner of Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn, New York: "It's a great fight that I can't wait to see. It will be tough for Cotto for a while, but I expect him to wear Margarito down and stop him around the seventh round." Cotto by stoppage.

Sean Sullivan, Editor-in-Chief of Boxing Digest magazine: "Cotto has more tools at his disposal than Margarito does. He can turn the fight from a brawl to a boxing match whenever he wants. Cotto has shown ability to battle back from adversity, but Margarito is the biggest opponent he has ever faced. Cotto is at the top of his game, and just does not seem ready to be beaten." Cotto by stoppage.

Teddy B. Blackburn: "It is hard to see Cotto getting beat at this stage of his career. He's too strong and aggressive for almost anyone. I expect him to steamroll Margarito and stop him around 2:30 of the third round." Cotto by stoppage

Jack Hirsch, British Boxing News: "Margarito should be able to withstand Cotto's attack and outlast him. He is too big and strong for Cotto, and should score a late round stoppage." Margarito by stoppage.

Calvin Brock, former heavyweight title challenger: "Margarito takes a good punch, but Cotto has faster hands and can box when he has to. Margarito is much more straightforward and one-dimensional. Cotto is the total package, so he should win a decision." Cotto W 12.

Mike Silver, noted boxing historian: "Margarito is a tough guy, but Cotto has shown spurts of greatness on many occasions. His great body attack is unique among fighters today. Margarito is very good, but Cotto is better. He will show that again in this fight by stopping Cotto in the late rounds." Cotto by stoppage.

Randy Gordon, former New York State boxing commissioner: "The greatness of Cotto will come out in this fight. His hand speed, accurate combinations and combination punching will rise to a new level. He'll get hit and he might get hurt, but he will win a decision in a hard fought and competitive battle." Cotto W 12.

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Bob Mladinich, TSS: "I can't imagine a better matchup at any fight. Both of these guys generate excitement. A solid argument could be made for either guy, but it is hard not to lean toward Cotto. He just seems to do everything well. He is a literal fighting machine and has an iron will to boot. He is truly a fighter for the ages." Cotto W 12.

Totals: 15

Cotto: 13

Margarito: 2

Cotto by decision: 5

Cotto by stoppage: 8

Margarito by decision: 0

Margarito by stoppage: 2