

An Open Letter To Antonio Margarito

Written by John Nguyen
Saturday, 26 July 2008 19:00

Dear Antonio,

I, along with much of the boxing world, owe you an apology. A real man admits when he's wrong, and, man, was I wrong. Not just about the outcome of Saturday night's war with Miguel Cotto, but about your identity as a fighter through your entire professional career. This isn't an attempt to jump on the Antonio Margarito Bandwagon; right about now, I'm guessing the line for that is longer than the one for Space Mountain. In contrast, this is a sincere apology to a guy that most of us had pegged completely wrong for the longest time.

The general consensus among the sport's observers was that you were cut from the same cloth as other great Mexican warriors of years past, but maybe lacked the polish to excel at the elite level. Let's be honest; your track record going into the Cotto fight didn't exactly quicken many pulses.

Most of the fans and experts who picked you to win Saturday cited Cotto's flaws rather than your virtues, which was a back-handed compliment of sorts. Those who favored Cotto, myself included, were going with a fighter who had the look of a young thoroughbred, untainted by defeat and undaunted by challenge.

So, about halfway through Saturday's slugfest, and with Cotto largely in charge of the proceedings, I sat back, satisfied that my record in official TSS fight picks would cruise to 6-0. As I was marveling at my own prognosticating talents, something happened. Suddenly, the tide turned, and you did what you do best. You humble people, opponents and doubters alike.

Miguel Cotto was doing exactly what most of us thought he would do. He was boxing effectively and landing wicked blows with regularity. He demonstrated that, at a purely athletic level, he has the edge. But, the thing about prizefighting is that it is not a purely athletic contest. Intangibles such as heart and desire are as significant as a good hook. We saw an example of that on Saturday night.

We all know it's been a long road for you, Antonio. But I'm not sure any of us really knew how difficult it was until we saw the desperation with which you pursued victory on Saturday night. Those punches were fueled by years of frustration, lack of respect, and broken dreams. The portrait painted was of a man who knew this was his last chance, and he wasn't going to let it slip through his fingers without clenching his fists as tight as he could.

It took fifteen long years as a professional, but you are now sitting on top of the world. I'm guessing it's a pretty sweet view.

For the record, I'm not embarrassed to have picked Cotto. I, along with what seemed like the majority of the "experts," went with skill, speed, and youth to carry the day. Cotto was the logical pick when examining the fight from all angles. But logic doesn't win fights.

An Open Letter To Antonio Margarito

Written by John Nguyen
Saturday, 26 July 2008 19:00

You don't need anyone to tell you how big this is for both your career and your legacy. All of a sudden, those comparisons with Chavez, Barrera, and Morales don't seem like such a stretch. Still, remember that the path to greatness is long, with many dues still left to be paid. But if the past is any indication, I'm going to guess that you'll be up for the journey.

Congratulations, Antonio, from just one of many whom you proved wrong on Saturday night. Bask in the overdue, but well-deserved spotlight. But not for too long, though. If Mr. Cotto is willing, we just might have to see this again.

Sincerely,

A Humbled Fightwriter