

More Merchant: On PacMan, Cotto, Oscar

Written by Michael Woods
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TSS checked in with the poet laureate of pugilistic analysis, Larry Merchant.

We talked PacMan, Cotto's loss and future, Oscar's farewell fight and Pavlik's chances at knocking out Hopkins.

Q) Larry, who should Pacquiao fight next?

A) "It's very clear who should be next for Pacquiao, that's Oscar. It's a no lose fight for Pacquiao. He can make a good fight. Maybe he wins, he elevates his status. If he loses, he lost to a top fighter, a bigger guy, and he's made more money than he's ever made before.

"I give Manny a puncher's chance. Manny's in his prime, Oscar is past his prime. Oscar's talking retirement, sometimes when a guy is talking retirement, he is retired. Hey, if Roy can go from junior middleweight to fighting a heavyweight, and Oscar can go from super featherweight lightweight to a big middleweight..."

Q) What was your take on the Cotto/Margarito, and what do you make of Cotto taking a knee twice, and not "going out on his shield?"

A) "It was a terrific fight. Margarito was the bigger guy, who imposed his will and size on the superior all-around fighter. On going out on your shield, I understand the questioning of that. Once upon a time, going out on your shield was expected, even demanded. That ethic has changed. Long before it was accepted here, the Brits used to accept "resigning," or whatever, in between rounds. I don't think he can be judged. We'll see how he reacts in his next hard fight. Given his history at getting off the floor and dealing with adversity, I wouldn't question his gumption. He's earned the right to be sensible, rather than perhaps be too brave for his own good. There are a lot of different ways to give in that are not as graphic. You can lay on the canvas and jump up at 10, not protest when your corner stops it. You can foul yourself out. Judah has found a way. As for a Margarito rematch, it will always be there. There's no reason to have one now. He has to restore himself. We'll see what Margarito does, that fight may be bigger down the road. Cotto can then make the argument that he never experienced anything like that, now he knows how to deal with it. I think Margarito should fight Paul Williams."

Q) What's the inside scoop on what Oscar's doing next?

A) "I have no first or second hand knowledge. But I hear Bob Arum and Richard Schaefer are supposed to meet today. I'm not sure of Oscar's options apart from Manny. Cotto's gone. He's not going to fight Margarito. In terms of the kind of megabucks he wants for what he says is his farewell fight, the only other option is Mayweather. Mayweather, people tell me he's not coming back now. Hatton's fighting Malignaggi."

Q) Can Pavlik knock out Hopkins? Or are we assuming too much, that he'll beat Hopkins?

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A) "I don't like this fight. It was a short-sighted fight for Pavlik and his handlers. He doesn't get credit if he wins. Chances are even if he wins he doesn't look good. There's always a chance he might lose going up ten pounds. I don't get the fight, it could jeopardize the bigger fight, the winner of Jones/Calzaghe. At 26, what's the rush? Why go this route? I'm mystified that they'd take this fight."

Note: Merchant will be adding his wisdom and outspokenness for the Mosley/Mayorga, Calzaghe/Jones and Hatton/Malignaggi fights.