Written by Ron Borges
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Miguel Cotto is a refreshing face for boxing for many reasons, not the least among them being that, unlike so many fighters today, he seems content to do his fighting inside the ropes (with the exception of the occasional rumble with his uncle and former trainer Evangelista).

It has been nearly 11 months since Cotto suffered the worst beating of his life, a defeat that soon after became tainted when his conqueror, Antonio Margarito, was caught wearing tampered hand wraps with traces of plaster of Paris on them in the locker room before his fight with Shane Mosley.

Margarito and his trainer were suspended for at least a year by the California State Athletic Commission and the stunningly one-sided nature of the damage he'd done to Cotto (as well as to Kermit Cintron in the only two fights the former IBF welterweight champion ever lost) were quite naturally called into question. Cotto commented on it at the time but never took further steps to challenge the only defeat of his career.

Instead he followed the warrior's trail. He took time off to heal from what he admits was the most damage ever done to him, and then returned to what he is trained to do. He is trained to fight and so he did, but in the ring, not in a courtroom or even in the court of public opinion.

Recently, as Cotto prepared to defend the WBO title on June 13 from the challenge of former IBF welterweight champion Joshua Clottey at Madison Square Garden, someone asked if he'd considered trying to have that lone defeat nullified. His response was the kind all too seldom seen in boxing these days.

It was a reasonable one that sought no outside help. If there was a wrong to be righted, it seemed Cotto was saying, he'd take care of it in due time.

"We made the mistake of not sending anybody to check the way Capatillo was wrapping his hands,'' Cotto (33-1, 27 KO) said frankly. "We didn't check. Today we can't talk about it because we didn't know what happened.''

A simple recitation of the facts, not some lawyer-laden twisting of the facts. His people didn't check so what happened happened and Miguel Cotto moved on.

What he moved on to was capturing the vacant WBO title in his first fight back and then offering the dangerous and underrated Clottey a payday lucrative enough that Clottey chose to throw the IBF title under the bus when that organization tried to prevent him from taking it.

Clottey (35-2, 20 KO) won that then-vacant title last August in a fight in which he subdued Zab Judah. Now he intends to try and do the same with Cotto, who until Margarito made him quit on his knee was considered by some to be the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world.

Once Margarito's gloves came up dirty, a shadow was cast over that defeat but Cotto no longer speaks of it. Nor does he speak of possible bigger fights down the road against Floyd Mayweather, Jr. or Manny Pacquiao.

Wisely, he refuses to look forward or behind. He doesn't look at pound-for-pound lists or an attorney's briefs. He looks only straight ahead. Only in one direction. Only at the one fighter who is a threat to him now.

"I am training for everything,'' Cotto said. "If he wants to move I am ready for him. If he wants to face me in the middle of the ring, I am ready for that too. No matter what Joshua Clottey brings to the ring, I will be fine.

"I never expect an easy fight from any kind of fighter. I always train pretty good and I always train hard for any kind of fighter. Joshua is not an exception. I have nothing to say about Joshua Clottey because I am not Joshua Clottey. I just have to talk about myself.

"I can't tell you anything about the rest of the year or next year because right now I am preparing for June 13 against Clottey. The only person I have on my mind right now is Joshua Clottey.''

That includes the people who make up pound-for-pound lists. Were he still undefeated it would be a loud argument between Cotto's advocates and those of Pacquiao when that mythical title is being debated but he is not, and so Pacquiao sits atop every such list there is. At least for now he does.

There will be time enough to change that debate later. For the moment there is only one concern for Miguel Cotto. The only concern a fighter should have, the guy standing in front of him.

"It doesn't matter to me to be on any kind of lists, you know?'' Cotto said. "I am just here to train to beat Joshua Clottey and that is it.''

Until June 13 at least, that is how it should be.