

Written by John James
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Veteran fight publicist Fred Sternberg arrives late to the Cotto-Clotey weigh-in on June 12. He strolls in like he owns the joint, confident and grinning. "Freddie's here," he says to the reporters patiently waiting for a glimpse of Miguelito. Just beyond a curtain, beyond a steady stream of stripping fighters, Freddie Roach looks tired. He's in town for a quick stop in the Bowery to pick up his third Boxing Writers of America Trainer of the Year award. Still, Roach is polite and accommodating to the reporters and fans making their way over to him.

Most want to hear him size up Manny's options, others want his take on Cotto's chances against the 'Grandmaster.' Roach takes all questions. He's never a wise-ass. I wait patiently through endless questions about Manny's weight, his chances against Mosley, will he or won't he fight before the end of the year. When it's my turn with Roach, a booming voice announces the pride of Puerto Rico. I've got Freddie for five.

JJ: HBO 24/7 has done a lot for the Freddie Roach brand. How is it that you're a boxing trainer and you're so popular with the ladies?

FR: 24/7 does have a female audience. I walk down the street and girls recognize me now and I like it. I think girls are the best thing ever invented. I love girls.

JJ: You were 27-1 as a super bantamweight fighter, probably your best weight class. What do you miss about boxing?

FR: I loved to fight. I loved the competition. I loved the conditioning part of it. I wish I could have been world champion. I don't dwell on it but I think that was my dream. I never really saw this end of it coming.

JJ: What's best fight you recall as a student of boxing?

FR: Duran was my favorite as a young kid. Esteban De Jesus and Duran. Those fighters.

JJ: And the Duran-Pacquiao comparison...does it hold up?

FR: They asked me the other day who would win...I picked Duran. He's a lightweight. He's the best lightweight of all time. [laughs]

FR: The thing is I don't dwell on my career. I wish I could have gone further, but I did the best I could, and I'm happy with it. But the thing is I found something I do better, and I thank my [former]trainer Eddie Futch who taught me this end of it. I couldn't ask for a better job right now.

JJ: Boxing as a sport: Does it have a future? Do you see MMA taking over and replacing it? Do you see yourself involved in MMA ?

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FR: I trained Andrei Arlivoski. I trained a lot of top-level guys. I like a good fight. They have good fights sometimes. Some times they're really boring. But boxing's the same way. I don't think they're going to ruin each other. I think it's (MMA) going to hurt boxing in the future because they have the young audience right now. But I think they're losing popularity because MMA is starting to lean towards stand up more because that's the most exciting part. Two guys in tights on the ground...it's just not my thing. I mean, I know there's a science to it, but it's just boring.

JJ: You said Floyd is the easiest fight for Manny. What did you mean by that?

FR: Out of the three choices. Cotto, Mosley...I think Floyd's the easy fight. If you look at the record, if you look at his last two fights - Oscar almost beat him - Manny killed Oscar - Hatton was winning after six rounds - Manny destroyed Hatton - I mean, I don't see the greatness. Floyd's a good fighter, yes, but he's a counter puncher. He's afraid to exchange. I think Manny's going to walk him down. I think it's an easy fight.

JJ: What do you do after boxing? What's retirement look like?

FR: Probably die.