

Clearer Heads Prevail: Pacquiao And Cotto Agree To A Real Fight

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Tuesday, 21 July 2009 19:00

Finally, clearer heads prevailed this week. Shortly there will be a press conference to announce that Manny Pacquiao 49-3-2 (37) the best junior welterweight in the world, will fight WBO welterweight champ Miguel Cotto 34-1 (27) on November 14th in Las Vegas. Cotto's WBO welterweight title will be on the line, however there is a 145 pound catch-weight clause in the contract. Catch-weight fights are not something I like, but this isn't too bad and shouldn't have much or any bearing as to the outcome. If Pacquiao wins, it's legit and he gets full credit, and if Cotto wins he gets full credit and it can't be said he picked a smaller fighter.

The Arum/Roach/Pacquiao faction did the right thing by scrapping the clause insisting that Cotto had to weigh in at 143. What they've now done is put together a bout that will be regarded as the only true super-fight of the year, being that two of boxing's best are meeting at or near their prime. Both fighters have a huge following; one is an all-time great (Pacquiao) and the other (Cotto) is an outstanding/great fighter. This fight will make the fan interest for Pacquiao-Hatton look like the hype before an NFL wildcard game compared to the Super Bowl.

As it has been mentioned here before, Manny Pacquiao didn't fear fighting Miguel Cotto or Shane Mosley at or near the welterweight limit of 147. The catch-weight issue was pushed onto him by his trainer, Freddie Roach, and promoter Bob Arum. It was all business. When all is said and done, without the Pacquiao faction being able to come to terms with Floyd Mayweather Jr., they chose the right welterweight for Pacquiao to fight with the hopes of him grabbing another title.

Cotto was out-muscled physically by Mosley, Margarito, and Clotey in three of his last four fights. With that Pacquiao will not be fighting a super-strong welterweight, which is why the catch-weight of 143 would've really handicapped Cotto. Along with that, Mosley, Margarito, and Clotey have a better chin than Cotto. On the negative side for Pacquiao, Cotto has shown he's definitely more versatile than Margarito and Clotey. He may not be more versatile than Mosley, but he has shown to be better at adjusting to varying styles in the middle of the fight than Mosley sometimes is.

Cotto is the heaviest and strongest fighter Pacquiao has ever fought and will no doubt be highly motivated knowing he opened as a 2-1 betting underdog. He recently fought and probably hasn't let himself get too far out of shape, knowing that there was a real possibility of him being Pacquiao's next opponent. Miguel is a much heavier handed puncher than Ricky Hatton, and he doesn't come at you in a straight line. Not only can he fight as the attacker, he can also step back and counter, although that may not be the best strategy to employ versus a quick handed fighter like Pacquiao who is very accurate and usually lands cleanly with his set up and finishing punches.

Pacquiao appears to be one of the rare fighters who has brought his two handed power up to the higher weight with him. Despite Cotto being perceived as being the bigger guy, I get the feeling once they're in front of each other in the ring, Manny won't look like the smaller fighter.

Clearer Heads Prevail: Pacquiao And Cotto Agree To A Real Fight

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Tuesday, 21 July 2009 19:00

According to their measurements Pacquiao is only a half inch shorter and their reach is about the same, which is a big advantage for Pacquiao based on the strategy both will probably choose to adopt.

Speaking of strategies -- this one is pretty easy to figure out. Cotto has to take his supposed advantage in strength and make it the dominating factor in the fight. Basically, he has to do the same thing Ricky Hatton needed to do when he fought Pacquiao, only Miguel posses the better tools to execute it. Cotto has to get inside and bang Pacquiao to the body, but he has to do it without getting picked apart and hammered on the way in. Under the best case scenario Cotto has to force Manny to have to rush his shots and fight him off, instead of using his speed and angles to pick his spots. My one reservation with Cotto forcing it from the onset is Manny's early hand-speed combined with Cotto's slowness in the early rounds and his vulnerable chin.

For Pacquiao, the best case is for him to have Cotto come to him, without being overwhelmingly aggressive. Having Cotto following him sets Manny up perfectly to hit him with some blistering shots on the way in. Cotto would be best served to try to either put some real hurt on Pacquiao early and possibly stop him, because if Pacquiao isn't hurt or slowed by the second half of the fight, we know Cotto slows down and tries to run out the clock. And if it comes down to one fighter waiting on the other, Cotto loses. Miguel has to force Manny to react to what he does instead of trying to anticipate what he's going to do and then react to that.

This is a tremendous fight on paper to ponder. Can Pacquiao handle Cotto's heavy hands? Cotto may not be a great puncher, but he can really hurt and slow his opponent to the body and is a terrific finisher. On the other hand can Cotto navigate the mine-field he'll be walking into at the hands of Pacquiao? Will Cotto having to drop to 145 take much out of him, or has Pacquiao finally hit the tipping point moving up? It mustn't be overlooked that Cotto knows Pacquiao is the star and it'll be hard getting the decision if it's a close fight. And that may force him to fight with even more urgency, which could lead to him really trying to overwhelm Pacquiao physically, or getting caught and stopped on the way in trying to.

This fight would be beyond reproach if Cotto didn't have to weigh under the 147 pound welterweight limit, but I can't complain. No doubt both fighters wanted this fight and did what they could to make it happen. Everybody wins here. Pacquiao can make history and further solidify his legacy as one of the pound-for-pound greats in history. And even if he loses, his status as a great is safe and won't be hurt by the loss. As for Cotto, beating Pacquiao gives his career a huge infusion and will put him near or at the top of the pound-for-pound rankings. If he loses, he'll be paid handsomely for it and at 145 can accept it knowing he gave it his best shot. Along with that, if Cotto does lose he will have no doubt put up a great fight and will be heard from again.

Lastly, boxing fans win too. They'll get to see two REAL FIGHTERS who represent everything that's great about the sport of professional boxing. Nothing beats a great championship fight between two of the best in the sport when it comes to action, drama and excitement.

Thank you Manny and Miguel for acting like real adults and professional fighters -- that's why fight fans hold you both in such high esteem and consider you champions.

Clearer Heads Prevail: Pacquiao And Cotto Agree To A Real Fight

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Tuesday, 21 July 2009 19:00

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com