

Roach Training Pacquiao Not To Get Hit?!!

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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Last week Manny Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, was quoted in a website/newspaper based in Manila discussing his fighter's upcoming bout with Miguel Cotto. Roach said he was concentrating on how well Cotto did neutralizing Mosley's speed when they fought. This in itself is crazy, being that Cotto lessened Mosley's effectiveness by moving away and fighting as the counter-puncher, thus forcing Mosley to fight as the attacker. That wasn't Mosley fighting at his best since he often times goes right hand crazy when forced to fight as the aggressor, looking for the sensational knockout and usually doesn't try to set anything up in the process. Saying Cotto nullified Mosley's hand speed is a myth.

Roach also said, "Of course Cotto's power is a major concern for me but I really think that we will have no problems, I'm training Manny not to get hit." So much for picking a winner. If Cotto can't hit Pacquiao, there's no shot for him to win. Then again Roach knows he'll never have to worry about training Manny not to get hit because of the style contrast between his fighter and Cotto it's not the least bit plausible.

Freddie Roach can say anything he wants in trying to build up and hype his fighters. The sad part is many fans and writers buy some of the nonsense and cookbook logic spewed by certain trainers and fighters. Most likely this is because it fits their perfect world as to how they want to see or believe various things in which their favorite fighter/trainer can be perceived as being unbeatable or the best.

After Roach's remarks got out I was contacted by a Sports Radio talk show host from 950 ESPN radio in Philly. The host has had me on in the past to discuss boxing and asked about Roach's comments, being that Pacquiao-Cotto had been mentioned during a recent show. Addressing what Roach said was simple. There's nothing to it and the thought that Roach or any other trainer could teach any fighter not to get hit is ridiculous. Freddie was just throwing something out there being fully aware that somebody might buy it and create a little pre-mature banter about the fight. Trainers often try to sell themselves in a subtle way when talking to the media, despite professing they never do that and how it's always just about the fighter. The reality is most trainers don't think much of the media's boxing acumen, and thrive on the belief that most aren't confident enough in what they know to really challenge and push them on something that doesn't sound quite right, fearing that challenging the trainer could lead to him making them look foolish.

If Roach was attempting to do anything it was to possibly plant the seed in Cotto's mind that if Miguel fights Pacquiao in the same manner he fought Mosley, it'll bother and trouble Manny like it did Shane. And if by chance Cotto or his corner's brain-trust bought into that, Cotto would not only be throwing away his only asset which he brings to the ring, his supposed advantage in physical strength and punching power, he'd lose practically every round if he didn't get stopped. If Cotto fights as the counter-puncher Roach (not that it's even feasible that he could) won't have to train Pacquiao any differently.

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That said, Cotto was forced to move away from Mosley, Margarito and Clottey because he had no choice due to them being physically stronger than him. The reason he had better success doing that versus Mosley is because Shane looks exclusively for the one punch knockout when he's forced to lead instead of looking to impose himself more physically. Margarito and Clottey were much more in their element bringing the fight to Cotto.

Cotto can't wait on the smaller and quicker Pacquiao. If he doesn't impose his one known advantage, his strength/power, he has no way to win. It's imperative that Cotto's left hook is a big part of the fight or Miguel won't beat Pacquiao. There's no way around it, Cotto can't put any hurt on Pacquiao throwing his left hook or right hand as he's moving away or while he's planted with his back against the ropes. He either has to bring the fight to Pacquiao and bang him low with it so he hits something or land it during an exchange.

There's only one way Cotto can fight Pacquiao if he's to win. That is he has to employ constant pressure from the opening bell and move forward and force the fight. Sort of in the manner he fought Carlo Quintana and Zab Judah when he totally wore and broke them down. Granted, Judah doesn't have the toughness and guts like Pacquiao, but he showed up at Madison Square Garden that night to win, though he eventually wilted under Cotto's pressure. If Cotto doesn't have to think about being outmuscled, he'll fight without trepidation and continue to push the fight.

When all is said and done Pacquiao-Cotto comes down to a few things that'll determine the outcome of the fight, and it doesn't take a real sophisticated boxing observer to deduce them. Does Manny punch hard enough to hurt Cotto and impede him from coming after him? And will Cotto's face bust up and swell to the point where his vision becomes more impaired as the fight progresses, something that has happened in two of Miguel's last three bouts. Pacquiao is not going to outbox Cotto for twelve rounds if he's not strong enough to hold his own. If Manny can't get his attention and can't cut him up, he is going to be worked over pretty good in the fight.

Lastly, if Cotto's big left hook doesn't hurt Pacquiao enough to the point where he has to hold and break off the exchanges, and Manny isn't forced to fight from bell-to-bell and can pick his spots, Cotto won't go the distance.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com