

Roach Has The Recipe: Don't Allow Cotto To Get Momentum

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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As the Pacquiao-Cotto fight gets closer, Pacquiao's head trainer Freddie Roach has been very obliging to the media and fans with continuous quotes and statements to stimulate more interest in the fight. In one of his more recent quotes he said Pacquiao had to "start fast and finish strong" when he confronts Cotto on November 14th. This is probably the best game-plan that Manny can try to implement versus Cotto when they meet in a little less than two weeks.

"We need to be fast and aggressive at the start," Roach said. Then mentioned how Cotto is a slow starter and very well could be disrupted and bothered by Manny jumping on him at the opening bell.

Roach went on to say, "We must not give him (Cotto) the momentum because he gets stronger." And then went into how Cotto was in trouble versus Zab Judah in the early going of the first round, and said Judah is not Pacquiao and believes if Pacquiao plants him with something big he'd be in even bigger trouble than he was versus Judah.

It's hard to dispute what Roach has said. However, there's one thing that went unsaid by Roach, and of course it's something that you'll never hear from the Pacquiao faction. And that's the fact that Cotto is not the same fighter who fought Judah two and a half years ago. There's just no getting around that. Since beating Judah, Miguel has had three physically taxing fights, with Shane Mosley, Antonio Margarito and Joshua Clottey.

In those three bouts Cotto was hit hard and forced to fight in retreat during many of those 35 rounds. In his last bout with Clottey it was easy to see, regardless of the competitor and warrior Miguel is - he was trying to run the clock out and do just enough to win. He's just not the same fighter who fought Judah mentally or physically. Not to mention he is bothered psychologically by getting hit more at this time than he was in 2007.

The other thing that's simply not a given is the belief that Pacquiao is a greater puncher than Judah was in June of 2007. Maybe he is but it's not beyond questioning. Which is a lot different than saying Judah is/was a better fighter than Pacquiao, something he's clearly not. Pacquiao is without a doubt a greater fighter and has clearly exhibited more heart and guts than Judah ever has. Zab was/is more of a front runner and when the going got tough at the world class level he sometimes cracked. Whereas Manny loves to fight and really is a fearless guy. That's what really separates them as fighters.

The reason Pacquiao is perceived as being such a great puncher at 140-145 is based on his last fight with Ricky Hatton. And because of the spectacular way the fight ended with Pacquiao crashing a beautiful overhand left against the incoming and wide open Hatton's chin, it's assumed that he's a great puncher at welterweight. But in reality Mayweather stretched Hatton with one punch before Pacquiao did. And nobody considers Mayweather a big one shot banger at welterweight, do they? It may have took Floyd longer to do it, but that's a matter of styles more than anything else.

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No one can argue that Zab Judah's a greatly skilled fighter and accurate puncher. He also has very fast hands and was in the fight early against Mayweather. The difference was Floyd broke Zab mentally more than he did physically, and that's what really set them apart. Granted, there's nothing on Judah's record to suggest he's a life-taker, but Pacquiao's not a proven puncher at welterweight any more so than Judah. Had Judah fought the versions of De La Hoya and Hatton that Pacquiao did, is it a reach to envision him taking them apart in a similar fashion as Pacquiao did?

The Cotto-Judah fight is the main fight everybody has been looking to for a comparison as to how Pacquiao matches up with Cotto due to the similar styles between Judah and Pacquiao. But that fight provides two tales. The first being Cotto is hittable and capable of being hurt and shook early. And the other conformation is that against a average size welterweight, something both Pacquiao and Judah are, Cotto can be a monster when he gets through and beats on his opponents' body. No fighter ever made Judah look for a way out the way Cotto did once he started banging on him.

And that's why Roach couldn't be more correct in suggesting Pacquiao jump on Cotto at the bell for the first round. Along with that Cotto doesn't appear to be the finisher late in the fight that he was two plus years ago. Actually in his last fight it looked as though he was counting down the seconds and barely crossed the finish line. Then again if Cotto can take a little out of Pacquiao by going to the body, if he can get to it, he may not have to be the finisher he used to be.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com