

Just Working On Fighting A Southpaw

Written by Rick Folstad

Tuesday, 03 November 2009 19:00

It's hot and sticky and just after 1 p.m. on a weekday and there is a large crowd trying to peek in through the sliding doors that open into the Fight Factory gym. They're lined up five and six deep like a mob of teenage girls trying to catch a glimpse of a rock star.

But it's only Miguel Cotto they're trying to see. He's inside working, which is more than you can say for the crowd outside.

Don't these people have jobs? Don't they know boxing is dead, it's epitaph already carved in stone, an ugly passing brought on by things like cable TV, too many weight classes and mixed martial arts?

Guess they haven't been reading the papers.

Oh yeah. Newspapers are also dead.

Maybe the demise of boxing has been greatly exaggerated, you know, like Mark Twain's death.

Maybe we should look again for signs of life. Check the pulse, look for some color. Listen. Isn't that a heart beat?

How else would you explain the huge turnout for Cotto's training session. After all, he's from Puerto Rico and this is a Tampa Bay crowd. Everyone is standing on their tiptoes, leaning forward, trying to get a better look or a snapshot of Cotto and his camp before they pack up and leave for Las Vegas for Cotto's fight with Manny Pacquiao on Nov. 14 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Maybe the short, stocky guy with the shaved head and the glasses, had it right.

"Boxing needs this fight," says legendary trainer Angelo Dundee, who lives in Tampa Bay and was inside the gym watching Cotto go through his paces. "It should be a great fight and what ever they are being paid, they deserve."

What they're being paid is at least \$20 million for Pacquiao and \$10 million for Cotto, which should help both guys make a few car payments.

If Dundee was going to pick a winner, he said he'd go with Cotto, who goes about his training session like a guy who just found out his wife was cheating on him. He doesn't smile or talk, he doesn't joke around, and nothing seems to distract him from what he's doing. He's focused, a fighter obsessed with one thing.

Even when the crowd acknowledges his birthday (he turned 29 on Oct. 29) by chanting his name, he hardly blinks an eye. A schedule has to be followed and maintained. There's just so

Just Working On Fighting A Southpaw

Written by Rick Folstad

Tuesday, 03 November 2009 19:00

much time left to get everything right.

“I like the way he handles himself. He’s a pro,” Dundee says. “Look at him. He’s oblivious to everyone in the joint. I love the way he conducts himself.”

It’s rumored that styles make fights, and Dundee likes what he sees in Cotto, a right-hander going in against Pacquiao’s southpaw stance.

“Style wise, if I had a fighter fighting Pacquiao, I’d fight him just like Cotto is going to fight him,” Dundee said. “Cotto has the style to beat a southpaw. And not that I’m such a genius. I’ve trained six southpaws and managed one of the best southpaws outside of Pacquiao in Michael Nunn. He was the best.”

Dundee says when a southpaw faces an orthodox fighter, there is usually a lot of carnage.

“They seem to break each other up,” he said. “But you never know what’s going to happen in boxing. Certain people can always beat certain other people. One style beats another style.”

After Cotto’s workout, with fans still overflowing the front of the gym, Cotto sat down with his back against a wall and faced the swarming media.

Asked what he was doing different in getting ready for Pacquiao, he said he was just working on fighting a southpaw.

“You have to be prepared and I’m more than prepared,” he said. “Every fight is special, and I have to prove to myself that I’m still one of the best. I don’t have any doubts and I know what I’m capable of doing in the ring. But when you want something so much for yourself, you want to bring more (to the gym) every day.”