Written by Frank Lotierzo
Monday, 31 May 2010 15:00

This weekends Foreman-Cotto WBA junior middleweight title bout at Yankees Stadium in New York offers a contrasting style clash. Obviously with Yuri Foreman holding such a pronounced reach advantage, hell try and keep Miguel Cotto at the end of his jab and look to bust up and swell his face, cause a cut to impair his vision and force the fight to be stopped. Or he can box his way to a decision victory by keeping Cotto on the outside and turning him in the corners while trying to prevent him from getting inside.

For this bout Cotto has brought in highly regarded trainer Emanuel Steward to work with him, replacing Joe Santiago who trained him for his last fight, a stoppage loss to Manny Pacquiao. Steward is best known for being an offensive trainer and has usually enjoyed the luxury of working with the more skilled fighter/boxer when hes been called in during the last 10-15 years to help a fighter rebound from a tough loss in their last big fight.

Steward has thrived working the corner of such all-time greats as Thomas Hearns and Lennox Lewis. He currently trains IBF/WBO heavyweight champ Wladimir Klitschko and has taught him how to fight big. And like Lewis, Klitschko has improved under Stewards tutelage in using his height and reach in order to set-up his big right hand from outside. For practically every one of their fights under Steward, Lennox and Wladimir have enjoyed the physical advantages along with the edge in power over their opponents. And thats whats different this time for Steward. Cotto is a bigger puncher than Foreman, but other than experience he holds no other advantage, not to mention hes moving up in weight to challenge him. Simply put, Miguel is physically the smaller man in every aspect compared to Foreman.

For most of Stewards training career hes worked with fighters who wanted to keep the fight outside and draw the opponent into their right hand. Can you imagine Hearns fighting Cotto? Miguel wouldve been a sitting duck for Hearns right hand flesh seeking missile. Now Steward is working with a fighter who has to navigate his opponents right hand so he can get inside and work the body. Cotto, when hes been the physically stronger fighter and wasnt concerned with his opponents power, looked to fight as the attacker and pushed the fight. Since Foreman isnt much of a puncher, and Cotto cant win the fight on the outside, itll be interesting to see the difference Steward makes in him as far as his ability to pressure Foreman without absorbing a lot of punishment on the way in.

Theres been talk of Cottos bad balance recently, something that wasnt much of a concern until this fight. Steward mentioned last week that hes improved Miguels balance and hes more capable of getting off shots cleanly now without losing it or getting out of position. Hes also raved about how easily Cotto has been able to do 10-12 rounds of sparring without any problem. Having said that, Steward the offensive trainer is going to have to make a big difference on Cotto defensively. Meaning well have to see plenty of head and upper-body movement by Cotto on the way in if hes to have any success versus Yuri Foreman.

Steward is going to have to see to it that Miguel makes Foreman miss and then makes him pay

while cutting off the ring as he pursues his way in. Cotto already knows how to cut off the ring, but making Yuri pay off a miss while on the attack will go a long way in this fight. This is a lot different from the style Emanuels fighters normally fight. They basically looked to land the right hand from long range and the fight was usually over. Itll be worth watching the fight just to see if Steward can refine Cotto defensively at this stage of his career. If nothing else, itll seem odd watching Steward work with the compact swarmer opposed to being in the corner of the bigger and taller boxer-puncher. Most of Mannys fighters and champions have made their living with their right hand, whereas Cottos bread and butter punch is his left-hook.

This is a fight where both the fighter and the trainer will have to make adjustments.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com