

Cottos Mirage-Like Showing Exposed Foreman

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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This past Saturday night at Yankees Stadium in New York, former junior welterweight/welterweight title holder Miguel Cotto 35-2 (28) stopped Yuri Foreman 28-1 (8) in the ninth round to capture the WBA junior middleweight title. This was Cottos first fight since he was stopped by Manny Pacquiao in the 12th round last November, and also his first under the tutelage of Emanuel Steward working as his head trainer. Since Cottos left hook to the body dropped Foreman and led to the fight being halted 42 seconds into the ninth round, the consensus by most writers and fans has been positive pertaining to how Cotto looked.

Before touching on how the fight unfolded, let me say that I thought this fight was a kind of years of faithful service award for Cotto from promoter Bob Arum. It was my belief that Arum thought Miguel was on his last legs, but wanted to use his name to hype Yuri Foreman without Cotto getting hurt or taking much physical punishment. I believed that Bob was unsure of what he had in Foreman, but figured if he beat Cotto he could continue to market and set him up for at least one more big fight.

Since Arum promoted both fighters there was no downside for him. It really was smart match making on his part. Only sometimes even those on the inside who have worked every angle, get it wrong. Now with the result in, Arum knows two things he didnt know for certain before the fight, 1) Foreman is a very mentally tough but physically limited fighter at the world class level and 2) regardless of who trains Miguel Cotto, he better keep him away from the class of the welterweights and junior middleweights who are physically strong or can punch.

Let it be said for the record, I have as much respect for Miguel Cotto as I do any active fighter in the world. Miguel always gives everything he has on fight-night. Hes always sought to fight the best fighters in the world, never disrespects any opponent and never blames anyone but himself for a less than stellar showing. Not to mention hes defeated more than a handful of outstanding fighters during his career. No, hes not undefeated, but we know exactly what he is and can say with impunity that hes a definite HOF fighter and a near great. Theres certainly no guessing how Miguel would fare versus the best of his era, all one has to do is look at his record. His only two defeats came at the perhaps loaded gloves of Antonio Margarito and the physical brilliance and determination of Manny Pacquiao. Just think how differently every fight fan who isnt intertwined with advancing Floyd Mayweathers stature would view Floyd if he fought a prime Margarito and Pacquiao? One thing is for sure, a lot of the arguments as to who Mayweather has faced at 147 would be off the table.

Back to Cotto. As much as Id love to laud his showing against Yuri Foreman this past weekend, I cant. I believe Foreman was exposed for what he is; a tough guy whos been perfectly managed and on most nights wouldnt compete against the elite fighters at his weight. He had nothing to bother Cotto with. Hes not extremely fast, and his movement was the worst kind. Yuri was moving to survive and get away, not to set Cotto up or lead him into punches. Foreman couldnt hurt Miguel with his best and most flush right hands, and was shook or moved every time Miguel touched him. Even Cottos defensive jabs rocked Yuri.

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Yes, Miguel was very patient and measured against Foreman. And the reason for that was he could be, because he was the superior fighter in every aspect one fighter could be over another. And yet Foreman with an injured leg was still able to make it into the ninth round and had Miguels facial skin marked up after barely touching him. No way Miguel will have that luxury against some of the better fighters who are capable of fighting at 147/154. Pacquiao would beat him more convincingly if they met again, and Mayweather would control the fight every step of the way if they fought.

Cotto isnt completely shot and there are some fighters with recognizable names he can still beat and perhaps look good against. However, Id pick him to lose against any top-tier puncher or sharp shooter fighting at welterweight or junior middleweight. As good as he looked against Yuri Foreman, theres no such thing as the new Miguel Cotto and hes not back. He was just in against the perfect opponent and for that reason was never under fire or duress. Its not hard for a fighter with the experience of Cotto to stay measured against an opponent like Foreman. I seriously doubt Miguel wouldve looked like such a smart and complete boxer had he been in there again with Pacquiao or Clottey.

As of this writing Cotto has resurrected his great career, and hell move onto fight another big money bout and add to his bank account. And thats something he deserves as much as any professional fighter in the world. But I believe what we saw on June 5th regarding Miguel Cotto was mostly a mirage.

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