

Cotto/Foreman: A High-Profile Fight Foreman CAN Win

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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During the Gamboa-Mtagwa / Lopez-Luevano HBO boxing after dark card this past weekend, former junior welterweight and welterweight title holder Miguel Cotto 34-2 (27) was interviewed by Bob Papa. Miguel looked good physically and spoke quite clearly.

The last time Cotto was in the ring he was stopped by Manny Pacquiao in the 12th round. Cotto gave Pacquiao everything he had but couldn't quite handle Manny's combination of speed, power and unconventional southpaw attack. Shortly after the fight Miguel's father passed away from an apparent heart attack. So it's been a rough two months for Miguel.

If there ever was a real fighter in the sport of professional boxing it's Miguel Cotto. This guy has never backed down from any fighter and has constantly sought to fight the best available opposition every time out. Having fought the likes of Paulie Malignaggi, Carlos Quintana, Zab Judah, Shane Mosley, Antonio Margarito, Joshua Clottey and Manny Pacquiao, his record reads like a virtual who's who list of the top fighters of his era.

During the interview with Papa, Cotto indicated that he's planning on going through with a proposed bout against WBA junior middleweight champ Yuri Foreman 28-0 (8) at Madison Square Garden. Foreman lives in Brooklyn and has a large following in New York City as does Cotto. The fight is tentatively scheduled for June 12th, the day before the annual Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City. Since becoming a main event fighter Cotto has routinely headlined boxing cards on the Saturday night on the eve of the parade when a large faction of the city's residents with Puerto Rican roots turn out at The Garden in support of Cotto.

The last time Foreman fought it was on the under card of the Pacquiao-Cotto bout. Foreman won a very workman-like unanimous decision over Daniel Santos, controlling the action most of the way and in the process captured the first world title of career since making his pro-debut eight years ago.

"He's a great champion, pound-for-pound one of the best fighters out," is how Foreman described Cotto.

For Cotto the fight with Foreman would be his first fight at 154 pounds and affords him a chance to win a third world title in three different weight divisions. My first inclination after finding out Foreman-Cotto was in the works was perhaps Miguel should take an easy fight coming off the brutal bout with Pacquiao. However, Cotto doesn't go the easy fight route which is terrific for fight fans but will no doubt shorten his career. Then after thinking about it, it's good matchmaking on the part of Bob Arum who has promotional ties to both Cotto and Foreman.

Foreman's a little too big for Cotto, but he's not fast nor can he punch. But Cotto isn't the fighter he once was. It's a high profile fight that Foreman can win (and there aren't too many of those), where Cotto can earn another good payday and not get hurt. And it's not like Cotto would be in over his head against Foreman and couldn't win. It's pretty transparent as to why the fight will

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most likely be realized, but it's a win-win for all involved.

Cotto's biggest obstacle will be dealing with Foreman's height and reach depending on how much is left in the reservoir of the fantastic fighter he once was. At this stage of Cotto's career, having fought Shane Mosley, Antonio Margarito, Joshua Clottey and Manny Pacquiao in four of his last six fights between November of 2007 and November of 2009, Miguel has endured a lot of punishment. He really must be managed carefully. Even in the two bouts he won against Mosley and Clottey, Miguel was manhandled physically - but luckily for him he fought the smarter fight strategically which enabled him to escape with a decision win over both.

Foreman hasn't fought a single A-level fighter. Cotto, despite being on the decline, represents his sternest test. A win by Cotto extends his career at the championship level and will no doubt maneuver him into position for another big fight and pay-day. So it cannot be said that Arum has hurt him. Miguel also may have been bothered by having to make 145 against Pacquiao in his last fight. No, it didn't effect the outcome of the bout, but it was obvious watching him on HBO's 24/7 that it bothered him mentally.

Fighting at 154 will be a relief mentally, but it could really hinder him physically and make him a sitting duck for Foreman if the weight noticeably slows him down. On the other hand if Foreman beats Cotto, it won't be in a brutal fashion. And if he were to lose to him, it won't be in a manner that he won't be able to recover and come back from.

Foreman vs. Cotto represents an opportunity for Yuri Foreman to mark his arrival, and for Miguel Cotto it's a chance for him to remain a major player among the welterweight and junior middleweight elite.

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