

Too Versatile, With Too Many Weapons: The Case For A Manny Pacquiao Win

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Thursday, 11 March 2010 18:00

In the end, what happens in the Pacquiao-Clottey bout will come down to: Can Joshua Clottey take Manny Pacquiao's punches in bunches and retain the gumption to fight back enough to win? Because he's sure going to get hit with combinations from undetectable angles like he's never experienced before in his career over the course of 12-rounds if the fight goes the distance.

Tomorrow, Manny Pacquiao will bring into the ring an overwhelming assortment of physical weapons and means to win his upcoming fight against Joshua Clottey.

Pacquiao is a more gifted fighter than Clottey from a physical vantage point, excluding strength. He's quicker handed, more mobile, more versatile, is a better puncher for their comparative sizes, has more of fighter's heart, has a history of passing the Big Stage tests that Clottey fails, and since there's a ton of money to be made if he wins, has the boxing establishment behind him in the event the fight goes to a decision. Clottey would damn near have to kill Pacquiao to win a decision. And Joshua Clottey, as we've repeatedly seen, is no killer in the ring.

Pacquiao's ability to disrupt and overwhelm his opponent while moving forward or backwards is huge in this bout because Clottey's style is pretty rudimentary and he seldom strays from it regardless of who he's fighting. However, that could very well change this time out. Yes, he's a counter-puncher that often comes forward squared up, but there is a scenario that exists in which he may try to get Pacquiao to lead.

Most likely Clottey has been training to go after Pacquiao and impose his presumed physical strength over him and make it become the defining factor in what sways the fight in his favor. The problem in doing that against Pacquiao is, it makes it easier for Manny to get through and land cleanly with his best shots. If Clottey's pushing the fight, he has to do it while he's letting his hands go as he's stepping to Pacquiao which will open him up more to get hit. A fighter moving to his opponent without letting his hands go isn't an effective aggressor and is more easily out-boxed.

So one has to assume Clottey will come in behind his left jab, looking to catch Pacquiao during any split-second lulls, with the hope of finding a home for his quick right lead, a punch that could disrupt Pacquiao's return fire if Clottey can land it with the slightest bit of regularity. Then again, trying to draw Pacquiao out and into exchanges could turn out to work against Clottey too.

As we've seen over his last three fights, Pacquiao's offensive bursts are very hard to neutralize. The angles in which he attacks and gets off from, coupled with his hand speed and punch variation makes it very hard to beat him via exchanging punches and trading with him. Initiating Pacquiao to engage isn't the best strategy because he usually always lands the first and last punch during the exchange - translating into him getting the better of the sustained action as it progresses.

Too Versatile, With Too Many Weapons: The Case For A Manny Pacquiao Win

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Thursday, 11 March 2010 18:00

The other scenario that's leaked out from the Clotley camp is they're going to try and make Clotley's left-uppercut the signature weapon in his arsenal. To do this to it's optimum, Clotley would be best served by drawing Pacquiao into it - instead of over-loading and throwing it recklessly -- which would leave him vulnerable to being countered with big shots he'd never see until they were on their way back. Therefore, Clotley will probably try to draw Pacquiao into him by inching back looking for the clean shot, thus using his left-uppercut as a set up punch.

Once again Pacquiao can trump Clotley's strategy here because he doesn't come in straight and it's hard to predict or anticipate where he'll be even as he's carrying the fight. And if Pacquiao flurries before Clotley is set to punch, it'll force Joshua to throw his punches more out of desperation with the intent to occupy Pacquiao and get him off than with the intent to do damage or score. And if that scenario unfolds, Clotley will be even more susceptible to Pacquiao's counters coming at him as if he had four arms.

From a style perspective, Pacquiao would seem to have an answer for whatever Clotley tries to do. So basically, Clotley has two choices; push the fight and try to overwhelm Pacquiao and force him to fight to survive more so than to dictate and control it. And if he can't do that he'll set himself up and be walking into Pacquiao's Sunday best. And that'll make it even easier for Manny to land right hands around Clotley's guard and straight left crosses in between his gloves. His other option is he can try to draw Pacquiao into him while trying to catch him with his best punch, his left-uppercut. But landing an uppercut on a moving target is a tall order, and if he misses with it he'll be left virtually defenseless. Not to mention Pacquiao can score and land effectively without having to crowd or be right on top of Clotley.

Clotley is seemingly in a catch-22 stylistically regardless of the strategy he chooses to employ against Pacquiao. If that weren't enough there are two other problems Clotley faces that favor Pacquiao. And they are 1) Clotley isn't the puncher that Miguel Cotto is - and Pacquiao was never really hurt or bothered by the best Cotto had to offer offensively, 2) Clotley's best punch is his left uppercut. The uppercut is a setup punch, not a finishing punch. Even if Clotley manages to bring it home, is it plausible to assume he'll hurt Pacquiao enough with it for him to swing the fight in his favor? And how many of them can he really land in succession? If Clotley had a finishing right hand or hook behind his uppercut, his chances of scoring the upset would increase geometrically, but he doesn't.

When all is said and done, Clotley doesn't possess the power or work rate to neutralize Pacquiao's speed, power and unconventional offensive assault. Add to that Manny thrives on fighting his best in a big spot, and Clotley is prone to drifting and having mental lapses sometimes at a critical part during the fight, it's hard to see him winning. And lastly, it's tough to fathom Pacquiao losing at this time to an opponent whose best punch is one that's used to set up an opponent, not get him out. No - not with all the weapons Pacquiao has at his disposal to overcome it.

Pacquiao can be successful fighting Clotley on the outside or inside, and can get the better of him if they're boxing and picking their spots or trading and fighting. In a nutshell, Pacquiao can overwhelm Clotley whether he's on the attack fighting as the predator, or using his mobility and speed against the incoming Clotley.

Too Versatile, With Too Many Weapons: The Case For A Manny Pacquiao Win

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Thursday, 11 March 2010 18:00

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com