Written by Adam Berlin
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Saturday night's welterweight superfight between Floyd Mayweather and Victor Ortiz has everything a prizefight could ask for: high stakes, innumerable subplots, and rivetingly compelling combatants. Appropriately dubbed Star Power, Mayweather vs. Ortiz will display the past, present, and, potentially, the future of the sport.

Among the many intriguing aspects of the fight are the numerous questions that surround both fighters. Answers will become perfectly clear after the opening bell, but five of the most pressing questions surrounding Saturday's battle are posed here.

#1. Does Ortiz have it in him to be more than just "good"?
Every fighter has a moment of truth, when the point is made clear where he belongs in the thereafter of boxing lore. In the opinion of many, Victor Ortiz already had his trial by fire and

failed miserably. His meltdown and subsequent white-flag surrender to Marcos Maidana provided all the information that hardened fight fans needed to know. The diagnostic test was run, and the prognosis was negative for Victor Ortiz.

However, many fight fans were left reconsidering if their verdicts regarding Victor Ortiz were made too hastily after his gutsy performance against the heavily-favored and undefeated Andre Berto. In a fight that exposed plenty of vulnerabilities for “Vicious Victor,” the 24-year old Kansas native showed an impressive ability to compensate for his deficiencies with vast reserves of determination and heart. Had he demonstrated the same gritty resolve against Maidana, the boxing world would probably be looking at this weekend’s matchup through very different lenses.

To say that Victor Ortiz completely restored himself with the win over Berto might be a bit rash; it might be more accurate to say that the Berto win made him relevant again instead of a written-off afterthought. Case in point, he hit the “Money” Mayweather jackpot. For Ortiz, though, this fight is about more than a payday. Or, at least, it should be.

Ortiz currently finds himself in what could be categorized as the realm of “good” fighters. He’s clearly world class, and would likely beat any welterweight on the scene not named Pacquiao or Mayweather. The question is whether he can elevate himself beyond “good” to “great.” It’s a jump that only a select few fighters in each generation are capable of making, and it’s a move that Victor Ortiz has the opportunity to make this Saturday.

Floyd Mayweather is a heckuva litmus test for evaluating a fighter’s greatness, but, like it or not, Victor Ortiz must face up to it. Can Ortiz achieve greatness later down the line if he loses Saturday? Perhaps. But it’s improbable that the jury of his peers will give him more opportunities to prove himself beyond this.

#2. How will Floyd Mayweather respond to fighting the first prime, young welterweight he’s ever faced?
Many fans and fightwriters alike mistakenly believe that all the questions about Saturday’s throwdown are hovering around Victor Ortiz. Certainly, most of them are, but “Money” has to change some interrogatives into declaratives as well.

One of the biggest questions is how he will react to facing a young, hungry, primed, and powerful welterweight for the first time. Though he’s been brilliant since moving to 147 pounds in 2005, a close look at Floyd’s resume reveals some shaky credibility when it comes to opposition. Since settling into the welterweight division, Mayweather has faced a couple blown-up lightweights and junior welterweights (Mitchell, Hatton, and Marquez), extremely limited welterweights (Baldomir), and a couple golden oldies (De La Hoya and Mosley). The closest to being a primed welterweight opponent for Mayweather during that stretch was Zab Judah. Even then, Judah was coming off a loss to the aforementioned Baldomir, and it was at a time of Judah’s career when his focus and mental edge were coming apart at the seams. That the fight happened at all was more about boxing business than deciding welterweight supremacy.

On Saturday night, Floyd will be in his most dangerous fight in years, possibly since his closely contested bouts with Jose Luis Castillo in 2002. The difference here? Ortiz is bigger, stronger, and younger than Castillo was, and Mayweather is nine years older than he was back then. Can Floyd continue to make the skill differential more relevant than his disadvantages in size, strength, and youth? Can Floyd match the hunger of a young lion like Ortiz if it comes down to it?

Don't believe the Vegas odds. There is definite drama and competitive suspense here.

#3. How will the big stage affect Victor Ortiz?
Victor Ortiz will find himself in a strange and new situation on Saturday night. He may think that he is ready for it. He may believe that it will not impact him. He may have convinced himself that it will be just like any other fight.

If so, he is wrong.

What he experiences on Saturday night will be unlike anything he's experienced in his career or, for that matter, his life. His every move will be scrutinized, the spotlight will be unrelenting, and the pressure will be suffocating. Along with all this, he will be facing the greatest pure boxer of this generation.

The question is not if Ortiz will be impacted by the big stage, but how he will be impacted. Ortiz has already shown indications that the added attention is flustering him. He stated in frustration that his press conference responses were essentially scripted by his brain trust at Golden Boy. He has expressed his distaste for the media as well as how it characterized him after the Maidana fight, a topic that still seems to irk Ortiz. Hopefully, he can channel those stressors into additional motivation; the great ones always find a way.

For the rarest of fighters, Mayweather among them, the world stage is an opportunity for them to rise to another level. Consider some of Mayweather's best performances: Corrales, Gatti, Hatton, Mosley. For each of these fights, he faced increasingly heightened expectations due to his growing public profile. Instead of freezing up in these situations, Mayweather reveled in them. The spotlight elevates his game to a different stratosphere, which is one of the countless reasons why Mayweather is in a different league than almost any athlete on the planet.

Under the glaring hot lights of the public eye, fighters invariably take one of two routes: they either wilt or flourish. The hype around Ortiz for most of his career made this moment a near inevitability. Golden Boy Promotions openly touted him as the future face of boxing. Ortiz has taken the scenic route, complete with unexpected detours, to get to this point. His chance has finally arrived. The question, now, is what will he do with it?

#4. Did the trouble Mayweather was in against Mosley indicate increased vulnerability?
Let's face it. There is only one undefeated, undisputed champ in boxing: Father Time. He gets the best of everyone eventually (although Bernard Hopkins is proving to be a frustrating foe).

This includes the great Floyd Mayweather. At 34 years of age, Mayweather is almost certainly

past his best physical years, although it is definitely premature to say that he is on the slide. The great ones can usually fight on past their physical peaks, drawing more on guile and craft than the athletic gifts of their youth. Mayweather's game relies on timing and rhythm, things that typically don't escape a veteran, so his transition into this stage of his career has been quite smooth.

It is perhaps too early, then, to use the phrase "vulnerable" in reference to Mayweather, but some point to his last fight with Shane Mosley as an indication that the inevitable erosion of the Mayweather empire could already have begun. In the second round of his lopsided decision win over Mosley, two monstrous right hands connected by Mosley that left Mayweather doing the chicken dance. It took some holding, grappling, and scattered spurts of fighting for Mayweather to get through possibly the most perilous round of his career.

Granted, all's well that ends well, and Mayweather went on to dominate Mosley in routinely prodigious fashion, which is what most have rightly chosen to remember. The fact remains, however, that Mayweather was in serious trouble against Mosley, even if only for a few brief moments. Ortiz supporters point to those moments as the strongest case for an upset. The logic is that if a faded, gunshy Mosley can penetrate Mayweather's Fort Knox defense, then the young, ferocious Ortiz should be able to blast through with devastating results.

If, hypothetically, Mayweather is in the beginning stages of a downward slide, he sure isn't helping himself with inactivity. Consider that in the past 45 months, Floyd Mayweather has fought just twice. Though he looked excellent in those showings, conventional wisdom is that layoffs and advanced age do not a sharp fighter make.

So, does the logic add up to an upset? Maybe. Maybe not. But an Ortiz victory would be far from the most surprising outcome in the history of the sport.

#5. Can Victor Ortiz hold it together mentally to pull off the upset?
This is the question that must have even the staunchest of Ortiz supporters losing sleep. In his most difficult moments, Ortiz has panicked under pressure.

In the fight with Marcos Maidana, Ortiz looked like a phenomenon when he dropped Maidana for the first time in the opening round. Then, just as suddenly, Maidana cracked Ortiz with a right hand that sent him crashing to the deck. The fight changed from that moment on. Even though Ortiz managed to floor Maidana two more times and fought effectively, there was a palpable sense that it was Ortiz who was fighting with greater urgency. Ortiz seemed to know that if he didn't get rid of Maidana quickly, he would be in serious trouble. It appeared that Maidana could sense it as well.

It turned out that they were both correct.

By the fifth round, Ortiz was unraveling, and one round later, the outcome was all but a given. It's rare to witness such an utter and complete implosion, but within the rubble left behind were the remains of Ortiz' career and reputation.

In what many believe was his moment of vindication against Andre Berto, Ortiz indeed fought bravely, but also showed the same dangerous tendency to come undone in the midst of struggle. After dominating the first five rounds, a slightly-winded Ortiz allowed Berto to dictate the pace to start the sixth round. A sharp turn of the tide ensued, and Ortiz soon found himself on the canvas courtesy of a huge right hand from Berto. A follow-up assault revealed that Ortiz was nearly out on his feet, and a stoppage seemed imminent until Ortiz landed a miraculous left hand that dumped Berto on the seat of his pants.

There's obviously no way to know, but what would have happened if Ortiz didn't manage to land a huge left of his own to stem the surging Berto tide at the end of the sixth round? Would he have continued to fall apart in a replay of his Maidana defeat? Watch that sixth round again and stop it prior to his knockdown of Berto, and use your boxing senses to predict what would probably have happened next.

Not a pretty thought, huh?

The good news for Ortiz is that he doesn't figure to experience the same type of pressure-cooker slugfest against the contact-conscious Mayweather, but he will probably encounter the most frustrating experience of his boxing life. How will he handle swinging at shadows as Mayweather slips and slides away from his punches? How will be react to taking pinpoint counterpunches straight in the mush when "Money" makes him miss? Will he stick to the gameplan, or will he resort to the same temperament that cost him so dearly in the past? Or can he calm himself and continue to press on in spite of difficulty?

Mayweather has managed to make Hall-of-Fame-caliber fighters look foolish and hesitant in their frustrations. The pattern for most Mayweather fights is that he asserts his dominance in greater measure as the bouts progress and his opponents get more and more hopelessly confused. Unfortunately for supporters of Ortiz, he is known as a fighter who tends to fade and get less effective as the rounds go on.

For Ortiz' training camp, the need for mental preparation almost seems more important than the physical. His physical tools are far readier for Mayweather than his psyche seems to be. It's possible that the win over Berto exorcised the demons that haunted Ortiz. He needs to hope that it did.

Conclusion

Boxing is a sport in which too few questions ever get definitive answers. However, should Saturday night's fight provide any truly conclusive result, each of these questions should also be resolved, settled by means only a prizefight can provide. Regardless of the outcome, here's to hoping that the actual fight between Mayweather and Ortiz manages to surpass the considerable rhetoric and hype. If it does, we're in for something spectacular.

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Wow! I'm worry about Vicious Victor O's mentally condition, then the Vegas's judges seeing and mindset condition. They are use to Money May winning, so they may assume that he had a bad night and give him the benefit of the doubt of a pseudowin. In other words, VVO can expect to be whup silly if Money May gets into his head or ROBBED by mentally-blind a$$ judges! Holla!

amayseng says:

Uh. When did Ortiz start to wilt n the Bertolucci fight?

He didn't. He got off the deck and collected himself and

Came out determined every round.

What is he talking about ?

brownsugar says:

Great perspective Woodsy... been checking out some of your tweets on ESPN boxing, some interesting resources you have... This article sums up the situation better than most, either Mayweather goes up in Ortiz's grille and feeds him sum of that "superchicken"... or Ortiz will expose any hidden degeneration and capitolize on the opportunity with wrecker-ball hooks and uppercuts... either way it's compelling.

I remember listening to the radio when Ali fought Frazier the first time... I was just a kid but I was old enough to view Ali as much more than just a fighter,.. he was personification of our potential as overcomers...listening to the fight being called and hearing Ali go down in defeat to Frazier was heart breaking... Then Ali took the mike... with a pinch of humility he gave Frazier what he always wanted to hear... respect and credit for being the better man that night... then he half joking eased everyones fight by saying,.. (paraphrasing) Hey... it's only one fight... I'm fine, I'm not hurt and I'll be back better than ever... you could hear the smile in his voice.

at that moment he was bigger in my eyes than he was before the fight... because he took his whopping like a man,.. no excuses...

That's the way I feel about this fight... either man can win,.. to the "victor" goes the spoils.. as long as they both give their best... it's only boxing... may the best man win... as long as both boxers give their best,..... that's all I can hope for. (especially for $54.95) wouldn't miss it if the cost was twice as much... I'm still on my birthday vacation (born on 9/11) see ya after the fight.

Condor says:

Brownsugar, nicely done as always! Michael Woods is the man! The TSS Champion Emeritus deserves a shout out.

I'm psyched for this one. Floyd's been around since the late 90's, the Clinton years (since he dethroned the late, great gentleman Genaro Hernandez) and Victor Ortiz represents a real, violent risk, in my opinion. Ironically, Floyd and the Klitschkos were emerging at the same time (Ks overseas, but Olympics together and sheer dominance all), which is pretty remarkable, and they all receive such savage criticism. Crazy.

I think Floyd prevails, but will get lumped up more than he's ever been. I predict a bruising war. Ready for this one big-time.

nashingun says:

while everyone awaits floyd to start making big fights with pac, cotto, clottey, margarito, williams, martinez he picks out ortiz... do we even need slick intellectual analysis on a mere inglorious cherry picked fight? ill pass.

michaelabii says:

Great piece Mike ! I think whats compelling about this fight is Floyds assertion that he will be coming forward and will not backpedal. To some this spells trouble for Floyd and may well be an advantage for Ortiz. I personally think an aggressive Mayweather is Ortizs wost nightmare. Mayweather is one of the best I have seen at fighting in the pocket and he is supremely confident in his ability to inflict damage up close. Better yet - he now seems to relish fighting up close. I have always thought that Mayweather fights better when he is not on his toes unlike De La Hoya who always fought better when he was on his toes. Ortiz reminds me of of Fernando Vargas a lot in terms of style and temprament. They have the same boxer puncher style. If Ortiz fights an intelligent fight I do see him having some success and he will land shots if he back Floyd up. However, Floyds timing is still the best in the business. You see that routine he does with uncle Roger where he touches the pads while Roger moves around in circles ? Thats Floyds secret to maintaining his timing. Roger understands Floyds rhythm best. I am looking forward to this. I wonder what Oscar will have to say if Ortiz loses ? That man flip flops like a whale!!

[QUOTE=Editor Mike;9340][br] /[/br]

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surrounding Saturday's battle are posed here.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]#1. Does Ortiz have it in him to be more than just "good"?[br] /[/br]Every fighter has a moment of truth, when the point is made clear where he belongs in the thereafter of boxing lore. In the opinion of many, Victor Ortiz already had his trial by fire and failed miserably. His meltdown and subsequent white-flag surrender to Marcos Maidana provided all the information that hardened fight fans needed to know. The diagnostic test was run, and the prognosis was negative for Victor Ortiz.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]However, many fight fans were left reconsidering if their verdicts regarding Victor Ortiz were made too hastily after his gutsy performance against the heavily-favored and undefeated Andre Berto. In a fight that exposed plenty of vulnerabilities for "Vicious Victor," the 24-year old Kansas native showed an impressive ability to compensate for his deficiencies with vast reserves of determination and heart. Had he demonstrated the same gritty resolve against Maidana, the boxing world would probably be looking at this weekend's matchup through very different lenses.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]To say that Victor Ortiz completely restored himself with the win over Berto might be a bit rash; it might be more accurate to say that the Berto win made him relevant again instead of a written-off afterthought. Case in point, he hit the "Money" Mayweather jackpot. For Ortiz, though, this fight is about more than a payday. Or, at least, it should be.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]Ortiz currently finds himself in what could be categorized as the realm of "good" fighters. He's clearly world class, and would likely beat any welterweight on the scene not named Pacquiao or Mayweather. The question is whether he can elevate himself beyond "good" to "great." It's a jump that only a select few fighters in each generation are capable of making, and it's a move that Victor Ortiz has the opportunity to make this Saturday.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]Floyd Mayweather is a heckuva litmus test for evaluating a fighter's greatness, but, like it or not, Victor Ortiz must face up to it. Can Ortiz achieve greatness later down the line if he loses Saturday? Perhaps. But it's improbable that the jury of his peers will give him more opportunities to prove himself beyond this.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]#2. How will Floyd Mayweather respond to fighting the first prime, young welterweight he's ever faced?[br] /[/br]Many fans and fightwriters alike mistakenly believe that all the questions about Saturday's throwdown are hovering around Victor Ortiz. Certainly, most of them are, but "Money" has to change some interrogatives into declaratives as well.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]One of the biggest questions is how he will react to facing a young, hungry, primed, and powerful welterweight for the first time. Though he's been brilliant since moving to 147 pounds in 2005, a close look at Floyd's resume reveals some shaky credibility when it comes to opposition. Since settling into the welterweight division, Mayweather has faced a couple blown-up lightweights and junior welterweights (Mitchell, Hatton, and Marquez), extremely limited welterweights (Baldomir), and a couple golden oldies (De La Hoya and Mosley). The closest to being a primed welterweight opponent for Mayweather during that stretch was Zab Judah. Even then, Judah was coming off a loss to the aforementioned Baldomir, and it was at a time of Judah's career when his focus and mental edge were coming apart at the seams. That the fight happened at all was more about boxing business than deciding welterweight supremacy.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]On Saturday night, Floyd will be in his most dangerous fight in years, possibly since his closely contested bouts with Jose Luis Castillo in 2002. The difference here? Ortiz is bigger, stronger, and younger than Castillo was, and Mayweather is nine years older than he was back then. Can Floyd continue to make the skill differential more relevant than his disadvantages in size, strength, and youth? Can Floyd match the hunger of a young lion like Ortiz if it comes down to it?[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]Don't believe the Vegas odds. There is definite drama and competitive suspense here. [br] /[/br][br] /[/br]#3. How will the big stage affect Victor Ortiz?[br] /[/br]Victor

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twice. Though he looked excellent in those showings, conventional wisdom is that layoffs and advanced age do not a sharp fighter make.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]So, does the logic add up to an upset? Maybe. Maybe not. But an Ortiz victory would be far from the most surprising outcome in the history of the sport.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]#5. Can Victor Ortiz hold it together mentally to pull off the upset?[br] /[/br]This is the question that must have even the staunchest of Ortiz supporters losing sleep. In his most difficult moments, Ortiz has panicked under pressure. [br] /[/br][br] /[/br]In the fight with Marcos Maidana, Ortiz looked like a phenomenon when he dropped Maidana for the first time in the opening round. Then, just as suddenly, Maidana cracked Ortiz with a right hand that sent him crashing to the deck. The fight changed from that moment on. Even though Ortiz managed to floor Maidana two more times and fought effectively, there was a palpable sense that it was Ortiz who was fighting with greater urgency. Ortiz seemed to know that if he didn't get rid of Maidana quickly, he would be in serious trouble. It appeared that Maidana could sense it as well.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]It turned out that they were both correct. [br] /[/br][br] /[/br]By the fifth round, Ortiz was unraveling, and one round later, the outcome was all but a given. It's rare to witness such an utter and complete implosion, but within the rubble left behind were the remains of Ortiz' career and reputation.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]In what many believe was his moment of vindication against Andre Berto, Ortiz indeed fought bravely, but also showed the same dangerous tendency to come undone in the midst of struggle. After dominating the first five rounds, a slightly-winded Ortiz allowed Berto to dictate the pace to start the sixth round. A sharp turn of the tide ensued, and Ortiz soon found himself on the canvas courtesy of a huge right hand from Berto. A follow-up assault revealed that Ortiz was nearly out on his feet, and a stoppage seemed imminent until Ortiz landed a miraculous left hand that dumped Berto on the seat of his pants. [br] /[/br][br] /[/br]There's obviously no way to know, but what would have happened if Ortiz didn't manage to land a huge left of his own to stem the surging Berto tide at the end of the sixth round? Would he have continued to fall apart in a replay of his Maidana defeat? Watch that sixth round again and stop it prior to his knockdown of Berto, and use your boxing senses to predict what would probably have happened next. [br] /[/br][br] /[/br]Not a pretty thought, huh?[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]The good news for Ortiz is that he doesn't figure to experience the same type of pressure-cooker slugfest against the contact-conscious Mayweather, but he will probably encounter the most frustrating experience of his boxing life. How will he handle swinging at shadows as Mayweather slips and slides away from his punches? How will be react to taking pinpoint counterpunches straight in the mush when "Money" makes him miss? Will he stick to the gameplan, or will he resort to the same temperament that cost him so dearly in the past? Or can he calm himself and continue to press on in spite of difficulty?[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]Mayweather has managed to make Hall-of-Fame-caliber fighters look foolish and hesitant in their frustrations. The pattern for most Mayweather fights is that he asserts his dominance in greater measure as the bouts progress and his opponents get more and more hopelessly confused. Unfortunately for supporters of Ortiz, he is known as a fighter who tends to fade and get less effective as the rounds go on.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]For Ortiz' training camp, the need for mental preparation almost seems more important than the physical. His physical tools are far readier for Mayweather than his psyche seems to be. It's possible that the win over Berto exorcised the demons that haunted Ortiz. He needs to hope that it did.[br] /[/br][br] /[/br]**[br] /[/br]Conclusion**[br] /[/br]Boxing is a sport in which too few questions ever get definitive answers. However, should Saturday night's fight provide any truly conclusive result, each of these questions should also be resolved, settled by means only a prizefight can provide. Regardless of the outcome, here's to hoping that the actual

fight between Mayweather and Ortiz manages to surpass the considerable rhetoric and hype. If it does, we’re in for something spectacular.[/QUOTE]

Radam G says:

@michaelabii, losing is a part of boxing and life. Big Money O is not a flip flopper. He is a legit gamers who has gamed and know da game. He's been a winner because he has taken risks and been himself. Fence sitters are the only losers in life. They are so frighten about losing that they also never win and are comfortable with it. What a shame. Holla!