

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 14 September 2011 15:30



Congratulations go out to the ace promotional people associated with the Floyd Mayweather-Victor Ortiz bout. They have done their job. They have pricked my interest more than I thought possible, have made me care more than a bit about the fight than I thought I would, and they have worked on me to the point that I saw Ortiz as an underdog with a sliver of a chance at an upset come Saturday at the MGM Grand.

I write "saw" because I have regained my sanity, or, at least, enough of my faculties to understand that Ortiz is actually tailor-made for Mayweather, and will not have much if any luck penetrating the superlative Mayweather defense in Vegas.

Those promotional folks, especially the ones who work on HBO's 24/7, are so skilled at manipulating a viewer, that I found myself in the last month-plus thinking that maybe Ortiz could

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shock the world.

We heard how strong he is, how he has knocked down every foe in every pro fight. We heard and saw how dedicated he is in training, and concluded that indeed he doesn't look to be overwhelmed by the size of the stage he'll find himself on. We heard and saw how he is fighting for a cause, for personal redemption, to send a message to the parents who kicked him to the curb, who abandoned him and his siblings.

We heard and saw all that, much of it with a Liev Schreiber voiceover, so it made it about 2000% more effective than it should have been, and thought to ourselves, 'Well, if Floyd has slipped ever so slightly, and shows his age, 34, then maybe we could see a shocker.'

Today, I have regained my faculties. When I hear Schreiber intoning in my head, I shut him off. And instead, I concentrate less on the emotional components of the bout, and the less tangible aspects which easily sway me, and more on the style and skills of the fighters.

Summarised quickly: I see Ortiz attacking Mayweather, coming at him in fast and furious fashion. I see him squaring up, losing his balance, and I see Mayweather positively dissecting him, countering him with extreme accuracy and success.

Ortiz is, yes, young and strong, and there is still a sliver of chance that Floyd has lost something, though I tend to think the rumor mill, out of his training camp, would have alerted us to this development. There exists a minute chance that Floyd's reflexes have deteriorated just enough for a Ortiz power shot to land full-on, and drop this era's best defender.

But with my faculties regained, I instead see Mayweather putting on his best showing since the December 2007 bout with Ricky Hatton. Ortiz doesn't have near the seasoning that Juan Manuel Marquez and Shane Mosley have. Both of them are still solid when it comes to controlling the terms of engagement. They can feint, and slide, and grapple, when they see the need, to buy themselves time. Ortiz cannot replicate their savvy and skills. And furthermore, he likely won't see the need to slow down the pace. His greatest asset to this point, his aggressiveness, will be his downfall. He will come at Mayweather hard and fast, but a measure of control will be absent. Mayweather will exploit that round in and out.

Ortiz seems to take the analysis of fightwriters personally at times. This is understandable, as we were a bit too casual in critiquing his heart back in 2009, when he chose not to continue in a fight that many thought he could have. My take today on what we will see on Saturday does not reflect on what I think of Ortiz as a man. In that realm, I respect the hell out of him for climbing out of a dark hole which would have claimed 99% of people dealt a similar hand.

The part of me that factors in personality actually roots for Victor on Saturday. An Ortiz win would shake up the sport, and give thousands upon thousand of "have not" kids more of a reason to soldier on. Not to mention, I have some socialist leanings, and think Floyd has enjoyed more than enough fruits of his labors, and think it'd be nice to see what Ortiz does with some Maybach money...

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But styles make fights, and Ortiz' style, and skills, will make Mayweather look like the best pugilist in the world. (Which he is. Until proven otherwise. But that's another worn topic for another day. We shall commence the "When will Floyd and Manny fight?" drumbeating come late Saturday night.)