Written by Eric Raskin
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We’re not exactly looking at a barren boxing calendar for the remainder of 2011. Over the next 11 Saturdays, there are 10 fight cards on either Showtime, HBO, or HBO Pay-Per-View. Four of the top five pound-for-pound fighters will be in action. There are eight different bouts remaining

that I would categorize as having “Fight of the Year potential” (including a rematch to the fight that is currently the frontrunner for the award).

So it is not an empty compliment when I declare that I’m looking forward to the December 3 Antonio Margarito-Miguel Cotto rematch more than any other boxing match between now and the end of 2011.

On the spectrum of sporting-events-as-occasions-for-rubbernecking metaphors, Margarito-Cotto II is a gruesome 10-car pileup in which it turns out all 10 cars were being driven by topless strippers. When the road is littered with smashed fenders, broken glass, and half-naked women, maybe you don’t feel good about slowing down to look, but you’re damned sure going to anyway.

Unquestionably, there are more important fights on the 2011 calendar. Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez is the third installment of an all-time-great rivalry between two future Hall of Famers. Bernard Hopkins-Chad Dawson is for a lineal championship. So is this weekend’s Sergio Martinez-Darren Barker fight. Margarito-Cotto II is by no means insignificant; Cotto is probably the number-one guy in the wide-open junior middleweight division at the moment, and he’s a fringe candidate for a P4P ranking. Still, compared to Pacquiao-Marquez III, Hopkins-Dawson, and Martinez-Barker, who wins and who loses in the Margarito-Cotto fight doesn’t carry historical weight.

Instead, the appeal of Margarito-Cotto is mostly of a visceral nature. It’s something you feel in your gut, not something you explain with your brain. (And yes, I’m aware of the irony in my devoting 1,000 words to trying to explain it anyway.) This fight stirs emotion. It’s a fight that lends itself perfectly to hype, and is also about 99 percent certain to live up to that hype.

The hype began with a three-stop media tour last week, and the last major affair was the taping of HBO’s Face Off With Max Kellerman. This tweet last Thursday from the debate show’s host said it all: “Just finished Cotto-Margarito II Face Off. Oh. My. God.”

(Quick aside: Kellerman gave followers perhaps his best tweet ever the previous Saturday when, at the conclusion of Erik Morales’ war with Pablo Cesar Cano, he tweeted simply, “Erik Morales!” It was a wonderfully self-aware use of Twitter, as Kellerman has perfected the minimalist color-commentary art of offering analysis simply by stating a fighter’s name emphatically.)

How could the Margarito-Cotto version of Face Off not be monumentally intense? One guy hates the other and believes his opponent spent 11 rounds three years ago beating him about the head with loaded gloves, not only stealing a victory but carrying the potential to deprive him of his health—or his life—through illegal means. The other guy feels that burning hatred and either lives with soul-melting guilt every day or is fighting the uphill battle of the wrongfully accused. Either way, his emotions have to be running high.

It’s a fight loaded with combustibility. You’ve never seen a man fighting for redemption to the extreme that Margarito will be. You’ve never seen a man fighting for revenge to the extreme that

Cotto will be.

There are so many compelling questions coming in. Will the outcome of this fight give us a meaningful indication of whether Margarito's hand wraps were "enhanced" the last time? How depleted is Margarito after his beating last November from Pacquiao? How depleted is Cotto after, well, being Miguel Cotto for 38 pro fights? Can Cotto hurt Margarito now? To what extent is Margarito in Cotto's head? Will Cotto's hatred for Margarito prompt him to stand still and slug it out all fight long?

One element of this fight requires no question mark: Madison Square Garden WILL be rocking. This could be the loudest and most passionate MSG crowd since Tito Trinidad returned from his first retirement and went to war with Ricardo Mayorga. Cotto's hold on Puerto Rican and Puerto Rican-American fans has been noteworthy, but it hasn't quite hit Trinidadian levels. Against Margarito, it very well might.

This is a pay-per-view that fans of fistic action won't be able to say no to. And that was true even before we learned that Brandon Rios is going to be on the undercard. You know that 10-car topless-stripper pileup? Add a live musical performance atop the cars by all four Beatles, including John and George somehow brought back from the dead, and you approximate the extra rubbernecking value of Rios.

Money is tight in households all over the world, and pay-per-view costs keep rising anyway. If ever there was a time to be discerning and disciplined about what PPV shows you support, that time is now.

But Margarito-Cotto II passes all of the "I don't care how broke it makes me" tests. This is the 2011 fight I refuse to miss, above all others.

Their first fight was a tainted classic. That taint is a key reason why the rematch might be even better.

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brownsugar says:

I liked the video when Woodsy says he looked deeply into Margaritos impenetrable eyes and still couldn't decide if he was guilty or innocent of wearing tampered gloves.... That's because there's nothing in there... no closet guitar player,.. budding actor,.. potential poet, or latent humanitarian... The spirit that inhabits the husk known as Margarito is just a pure sadist with an

overzealous discipline to train.. which enables him to dispense the maximum amount of pain and discomfort to his opponent in the ring... a facefighter who never had to worry about depleting his intelligence because he never had any... All he ever needed was enough functioning neurons in his brain to mobilize his feet and fists...Like Jason Vorhees he'll stalk Cotto thru the abyss of hell non-stop so he can administer a more frightfull beating than the last..this man was born fight...fair or unfair that's what he does... The only problem is 2 men have already taken him past what he was able to previously endure... and Cotto will be the 3rd.. don't miss it! It will be an emotional after party... I think we'll even get to see Cotto smile.

brownsugar says:

Oh I listened to Raskins post Mayweather/Ortiz podcast... good stuff,.. just like the Leonard/Hagler oral history. a classic.

brownsugar says:

With Cotto vs Margarito you're guaranteed no smiling. No hugging, No kissing and No glove taps. Just the snarling grimace of two warriors in a do or die.

Radam G says:

I'm with Fe'Roz on this one. Holla!

Robert Curtis says:

This will be a bruiser and not a snoozer. The audience will enjoy this one a whole helluva lot more than the fighters will. Ouch!

ali says:

I'm going with Cotto,....should be another great fight...I could never root for a cheater but who knows how this fight is going to turn out.... Cotto is so much better but I wonder how much he has left in the tank.

brownsugar says:

You bums better recognize... Cotto will seize the ultimate prize!!!!!

DaveB says:

How much does Margarito have left in the tank after he got train-wrecked by Pacquaio? Well both of them were. I think it will be a very competitive fight anyway, like Gatti/Ward. Two guys that aren't the best any more but they will beat the hell out of one another.

the Roast says:

[QUOTE=Fe'Roz;9697]Hide the kids. This one is for adults only.

They should have scheduled this on Halloween. Miguel better have some new tricks in his bag or else Antonio is going to steal his treats.[/QUOTE]

Great post. They should have done this on Halloween. The Roast will wear the Scream mask.

ali says:

[QUOTE=DaveB;9720]How much does Margarito have left in the tank after he got train-wrecked by Pacquaio? Well both of them were. I think it will be a very competitive fight anyway, like Gatti/Ward. Two guys that aren't the best any more but they will beat the hell out of one another.[/QUOTE]
Your right pac did give that boy a serious beating his tank I hope has less fuel then Cotto.

Radam G says:

Wow! WITF is ali yakkin' about? Bitin' off da words of the Roast, May I "get a translator?" Holla!

the Roast says:

Let me be the translator. He is saying that Manny gave Margarito and Cotto both beatings but he thinks Cotto has more fuel left in his gas tank than Margarito does, therefor Cotto will win the fight.

Radam G says:

Hehehehehe! OMG! Now Fe'Roz is gettin' on his comedy. The Roast is my selection as Bobby C's comic of the year. Holla!

Radam G says:

Between Bobby C and the Roast, my darn ribs are going to crack from laughing too darn hard. Holla!

Radam G says:

And now, here comes Fe'Roz gettin' jiggy with what cracks the funny bones. Holla!

FighterforJC says:

[QUOTE=ali;9713]I'm going with Cotto,....should be another great fight...[B]I could never root for a cheater [/B]but who knows how this fight is going to turn out.... Cotto is so much better but I wonder how much he has left in the tank.[/QUOTE]

Except if it's "legalized cheating" like Mayweather's sucker punch. Tada. Tada. Tada. Word up!

Holla!