

Slick Boxer Cotto Takes UD Win Over Mosley

Written by Michael Woods

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Rather than being a clash that featured Fast and Furious action, there was strategy and tactical excellence on display as Puerto Rico's top fight icon Miguel Cotto took a unanimous decision win over gutty vet Shane Mosley at Madison Square Garden on Saturday evening.

There were no knockdowns in the bout, which featured the younger man, tabbed as the banger, actually boxing more and better than the slicker Mosley. It was no fight of the year, but the nearly packed Garden sent the fans fans, split fairly evenly between the 27-year-old Cotto and Mosley fans, home happy.

The judges saw it 115-113, 115-113, and 116-113, while TSS gave Cotto the edge in rounds, 8-4. The crowd seemed to accept the judgement.

Cotto came in with 30-0 (25 KOs) mark while the 36-year-old Mosley entered MSG with a 44-4 (37 KOs) record. Cotto's WBA welterweight title was up for grabs.

Cotto backed up in the final frame and refused to give the masses a toe to toe going away gift. He popped his jab some, but one had to wonder why he didn't throw it more. A clash of heads opened a gash over Cotto's right eye, but it was too late for Mosley to target it.

Did Cotto send the right message backing up and boxing in the 11th? Well, his long left to close the round maybe gave the judges what they needed to give him the round. He was more active up close than Mosley, but Mosley stalked the stalker with admirable toughness.

Mosley showed great energy in the tenth and took the round with some nifty right hands that had Cotto backing up. A "Mosley" chant started, as the fans got behind the underdog. The older man showed tremendous stamina at this late juncture.

Cotto outboxed the man who is supposed to be the slicker boxer in the ninth. He made Mosley follow him, and remembered his jab, which set the table for him. He used his fresher legs to his advantage, and took the round.

Mosley didn't move as effectively in the eight and didn't throw enough. Cotto didn't blow anyone away, but he was more active, showing the judges he wanted it more.

In the seventh, Mosley's movement was effective. He moved to get angles, and he was light on his feet, and throwing, while Cotto followed a step behind. Could Mosley keep up with this tactic, or would his older legs betray him?

Cotto looked fresher in the sixth, as Mosley got on his bike, and shied away from contact. Cotto kept closing the distance and it served him well, as he tossed short, sweet hits. The crowd booed Mosley's movement.

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Mosley was more grabby in the fifth and he started moving more, maybe to get away, rather than get angles. Even when he landed a flush right it didn't look like it bothered Cotto. Cotto's hands looked to be faster and still, the Puerto Rican's defense held up.

The fourth was Cotto's. The distance closed in the fourth, and Cotto's power started to take over. Mosley landed a few clubbing rights but the power edge looked to be firmly in Cotto's corner.

Both men landed well in the third. Cotto started targeting the body with laserlike focus, and then Mosley talked with a sharp right that the crowd ate up. A Cotto uppercut scored and maybe gave him the round.

The second was a tight round with Cotto slipping well, as his underrated defense looked on message. Mosley hit him with a strong right late that had the crowd pumped, and pressed him on the ropes but Cotto fought back well.

The first was a respectful, feel it out round, but Cotto got down to business a bit more. He worked the jab and looked to land lead rights. Mosley took a while to get a sweat going.

Cotto mayb be second guessed some for choosing not to stay in Mosley's face, and stalk him in bullish fashion. Who knew he would outbox the man known for his sweeter feet? Who knew that Cotto's hand speed was quicker than Mosley's? Who thought before this fight that neither man would get seriously buzzed, or hit the deck, and that Cotto wouldn't land a flush shot on the Mosley family jewels. certainly, the bout was close enough, and Mosley looked sharp enough, to warrant a rematch if the public calls for it. Cotto, in the end, was fast with his fists, and his feet, and he stayed away from the fury, in order to turn in a smart, sharp performance.

UNDERCARD

Joel Casamayor beat Jose Armando Santa Cruz, or so the judges said. The 36 year old Cuban has friends in judges Ron McNair and Frank Lombardi, who had it 114-113 for him, while Tony Paolillo had it 114-113 for Santa Cruz. The WBC's interim lightweight title was up for grabs.

The loser scored a flash knockdown in the first, and pressed the action continuously.

Casamayor (35-3-1, 21 KOs) last fought in October 2006, in his tiebreaker match with the late Diego Corrales.

The Mexican Santa Cruz, age 27, drops to 25-3, but we all know better, don't we?

Antonio Margarito (35-5, 25 KOs) gave the what for to Golden Johnson, notching a KO win at 2:38 of the first round.

Margarito, age 29, typically starts slow, but he wasted zero time getting after the 33-year-old Johnson (25-9-3, 18 KOs).

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There were three knockdowns, and the ref finally interceded on the loser behalf, though it appeared he could have done so about a minute earlier.

Looks like we'll have a Cotto/Margarito matchup next, a Puerto Rican vs. Mexican tussle that will be sure to get the flags waving. The Texan Johnson had been on a 3-0-1 role in his last four.

Top Rank says junior welterweight Victor Ortiz (20-1-1, 15 KOs), from Oxnard, Calif., is going to be a star. He showed some spark blasting out Carlos Maussa at 1:47 of the first round.

Maussa dropped to 19-5, 17 KOs. The 36-year-old Colombian looks to be at the end of the road. He's dropped his last three bouts.

SPEEDBAG Some Hollywood morons almost made me late. Some fools who made a movie, "The Fast and the Furious," starring Vin Deisel, in 2001, made the promoters change the name of the event from "Fast and Furious." What, somebody was going to confuse the boxing with a film? What, it's not like maybe somebody would be spurred to rent the flick because the bout reminded them of it? Idiots. The PR staff had to re-do all the press passes, removing the "offensive" title, and thus there was a bad bottleneck of press trying to enter. And then some jackass in a trenchcoat cut me. You know who you are, Trenchy...

--There was a ton of noise for Mosley in the arena, way more than I thought there'd be.

--Jay Gon got a crappy auxiliary seat. Uncool. He was going to write up the undercard. Not cool at all. Was everyone ringside writing on deadline? C'mon now.

--Oscar says he's going to fight in May, in Dodger Stadium. He knows against who, but won't say until after the Mayweather/Hatton fight. Hint: he has already fought Mayweather, and lost, so he won't be fighting PBF. Who does that leave? Hmmm. Who could put about 20,000 imported bums in those seats to go with Oscar's 20,000? Hmm.