

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Friday, 16 September 2011 15:36



What's left to be said about tomorrow's WBC welterweight title bout between title holder Victor Ortiz 29-2-2 (22) and five division title holder Floyd Mayweather 41-0 (25)? Despite there not being much around in the form of competition because Floyd's waited for the real challenges to age or move up in weight, Ortiz is probably one of the more difficult challenges for him, at least based on Victor's last fight against former undefeated WBC welterweight title holder Andre Berto. So in the pre-fight analysis fighting Ortiz looks plausible for Mayweather if he's not going to fight Pacquiao. Then again most likely after the fight maybe not so much so.

As for the fight itself, Mayweather has every advantage over Ortiz that one fighter could hold cover another except that he's 10 years older and he doesn't punch as hard. However, in boxing if you can fight, punching power isn't the be all end all. We know Mayweather can fight and being Ortiz has dropped every foe he's been in with, it's obvious that the southpaw can hit. The problem in boxing is a fighter must have the capability to deliver his power or it's useless. And there are some fighters who are terrific at disrupting and neutralizing their opponents who can really crack - and Floyd Mayweather is the best in the world today at being able to do that. If that weren't enough to persuade you Ortiz's only chance is to land a lottery punch, think about the fact that Mayweather is the more experienced, durable and mentally tougher man. Now what for Ortiz?

As for what Ortiz can do to give himself a chance to beat Mayweather... That's simple, he must try to make the bout a fight. Which of course is much easier said than done. Victor must find a way to pressure Mayweather and get inside. He must force Floyd to trade hooks with him and more or less have to fight him off rather than allow him to pick his spots and box. The problem is Mayweather throws fast-straight lefts and rights that usually find their target. And Ortiz will be right there for Floyd to tag and pepper as he's trying to force his way inside. No, Mayweather isn't a life-taker when it comes to power, but straight shots that repeatedly hit their target will slowly but surely break down and impede the aggression of an opponent who's trying to push the fight. Not to mention leave him open later in the fight for finishing crosses and hooks.

Everyone expects Ortiz to be the aggressor in the fight, but it must be understood that there's a

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big difference between being the aggressor and applying effective pressure. Pressure is much more than walking towards your opponent. Marvin Hagler was the aggressor when he fought Sugar Ray Leonard, but he wasn't that effective nor did he make Leonard do anything he didn't want to. Ray forced Marvin to follow and chase him around the ring while he was being out-scored 3-1 and sometimes 4-0. And isn't it funny how it was said that Leonard couldn't hit, yet he hit Hagler hard enough to the point that despite having an all-time chin, Marvin couldn't just plow over and walk through him. In fact the only time Hagler really got off good was when Leonard needed a breather and went to the ropes and let Hagler do the scoring.

Real pressure is what "Smokin" Joe Frazier presented Muhammad Ali with in all three of their epic fights. Joe cut the ring off and constantly forced Ali to move, hold or fight. All three of those things sapped Ali's mental and physical strength. Against Frazier, Ali wasn't afforded the luxury of sliding and gliding around the ring and picking his spots to flurry and open up. Joe pressured Ali into doing everything he didn't want to. Eventually Muhammad got tired and decided it was easier to go to the ropes and let Joe get off than it was to try and fight him off. And if that wasn't enough, Joe even made Ali miss with his jab with his non-stop bobbing and weaving as he was cutting off the ring and forcing the fight on the inside.

Granted, Mayweather is no Ali or Leonard, and Ortiz is even further away from being a Frazier or Hagler. But the fundamentals still apply. Ortiz must find a way to apply effective pressure against Mayweather or he has no shot to compete let alone score the upset over him. Victor must try to make the fight ugly and hit Mayweather anywhere his body is exposed. He just can't look for the perfect shot or hope to score a single punch knockout. Instead of trying that losing strategy, he's got to open Floyd up and make him fight him off.

The problem is Mayweather is well aware of this and knows that his fundamental defense and sharp shooting will eventually reduce Ortiz's enthusiasm and subdue the pressure Victor is trying to apply. Floyd has seen Ortiz get discouraged and lose confidence in a few different bouts, although it didn't happen against Berto when Andre was coming back in the fight against him. But that was because Berto was fighting Ortiz and that opened him up for Victor to land his Sunday punch and regain control of the bout. Mayweather won't fall into that trap unless Ortiz physically forces him into that situation.

The only thing that you can look to if you are hoping Ortiz can pull it out is, Mayweather is no longer a mover. In his last fight he stood his ground against Shane Mosley and blunted his aggression with his accurate punching and upper body movement. He didn't use his legs much, if at all. And the conclusion from that is either Mosley was so far gone that he didn't have to, or Floyd knows he no longer can depend on them and must win his fights in the manner that Bernard Hopkins now goes about it - by taking the bullets out of their opponents' guns and then engage them in mini-shoot outs. On top of that, Mayweather keeps himself in impeccable shape, age not withstanding, so I expect Ortiz's legs to give out before Mayweather's.

If Victor Ortiz is smart, he'll do everything in his power to make Mayweather use his legs and force him to fight and trade. And even at that it probably won't be enough, but it's his only chance to win. Because if he is intimidated and doesn't pressure Mayweather, he won't be around to hear the bell ending the 12th and final round. For the sake of the fight being action

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packed with a little drama, hopefully Ortiz knows the difference between aggression and pressure, because there's a monumental difference between them.

Frank Lotierzo can be contacted at GlovedFist@Gmail.com

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FighterforJC says:

In the simplest term, Ortiz must maintain a high punch output even if he ends up going down in flames. Ortiz is not a plodder and his punches aren't wide. If he maintains a high volume, he will either steal rounds as Mayweather is too busy defending (like against DLH) or he will force Mayweather to fight. There's a very thin wall that separates a counter puncher and a slugger, and that's the punch volume. When you're slugging it out going toe to toe, you're essentially counterpunching; except you're trying to counter every punch your opponent throws. For Mayweather to remain a pure counter puncher, Ortiz's punch volume must be reduced to Mayweather levels, where there'd be plenty of posturing, feinting, guessing and waiting. A typical Mayweather victim waits forever to throw a punch, misses with that punch and gets countered by Mayweather. Ortiz cannot wait for Mayweather, he must initiate. If Mayweather tries to counter everything Ortiz throws then Ortiz would've succeeded in turning Mayweather into a slugger. The less aggressive Ortiz is, the happier Mayweather will be. Ortiz needs to go out there and be willing to take Floyd's best shots and keep on going. It sounds cliché but it couldn't be any more true than it is for this fight.

michaelabii says:

Great article ! I will add that Floyd is actually a better fighter when he stays in the pocket and utilizes those slight feints, shoulder rolls and head movement while throwing sharp counter right hands and dare I say sometimes mixing it up on the inside. I now believe that Floyd is a stronger fighter at welter than he was at lightweight and thus the supposed strength advantage for Ortiz will not be that much of a factor. What will be a factor is Victor's one punch knockout power. The kid can punch for sure and I think Floyd realizes this. Nazim Richardson once said that once Shane hurts Floyd we would see the dragon in him. If Floyd does get hurt it will be bad news for Victor because Floyd will put his defense in over drive, stand his ground and fire off rapid counter and lead shots in center ring. Ortiz is good but he is certainly not a 2011 reincarnation of a 24 year old Roberto Duran. I anticipate a good action packed fight which could possibly go the distance with Mayweather winning a hard fought decision.

michaelabii says:

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Good analysis JC. I keep thinking that Floyd fights better when he is on the attack even though he is always seen as a pure boxer. I think he has realized this and even Emmanuel Steward opined that Floyd fights at a whole different level when he has a more aggressive mindset. Victor will have a good night if Floyd elects to go to the ropes and counter from there. However if Floyd decides to stand his ground and box Ortiz in the pocket it could be an early night.