

THE BREAKDOWN: Floyd Mayweather vs. Miguel Cotto

Written by Lee Wylie
Tuesday, 01 May 2012 09:20



Floyd Mayweather-Miguel Cotto on Saturday, May 5 at the MGM Grand, Las Vegas; on HBO PPV; 12 rounds for Cotto's WBA junior middleweight title

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At a glance, the fight looks intriguing. Miguel Cotto (37-2 with 30 KOs) has only experienced defeat twice before -both of which, you could say,have question marks against them. He is currently on a three fight winning streak,looking increasingly galvanised in each of them,and his skills seem alot more refined under the tutelage of Pedro Diaz and Emanuel Steward before him. Once a stalking body seeking puncher, Cotto has now integrated more movement and a well rounded attack into his arsenal.At 31 years-old, Cotto will not only be the younger man, but having campaigned at 154 pounds since 2010, he will also be the naturally heavier man as well. His opponent, moving up from 147 pounds, is 35 years-old. It would be easy to suggest then, that Cotto is back to his best. Back in 2007, Cotto was once as high as number two pound for pound on a lot of people's lists, and many thought he had the ability to beat the fighter that was seeded above him - the very man that Miguel Cotto will be sharing a ring with on Saturday night. Unfortunately for him, the 7-1 odds in his opponent's favour are a perfect representation of the most revealing factor of the fight--his opponent is like no other opponent Miguel Cotto has faced before.

Simply put, Floyd Mayweather, 42-0 {like you didn't know already}is operating on an entirely different stratosphere to almost every other fighter on the planet. When it comes to his application to the sweet science,he is without doubt the most cerebral practitioner in the modern fight game - his ability to dissect an opponent's style and construct a way to negate anything his opponent does leads to his opponents being faced with the almost impossible task of conjuring up a way to solve the Mayweather riddle themselves. Mayweather's boxing acumen leads me to believe that he has selected Miguel Cotto for a particular reason. Despite Mayweather's sterling job of promoting the fight, most notably, his claims that Cotto is undefeated as a result of Margarito's alleged loaded hand wraps and Manny Pacquiao's weight draining bargaining exploits,I honestly believe that this is a fight that Mayweather will be able to dominate from start to finish.

Not too long ago, I wrote a tongue in cheek article entitled "No Lie, Cotto Has No Chance vs Mayweather." While the purpose of it was to entertain, there was, I felt, some home truths in it. Barring a catastrophic physical decline from Mayweather, I genuinely believe that Miguel Cotto has little or no chance on Saturday night.

Don't get me wrong, this is not a shot at Miguel Cotto - there's a lot to like about him. I acknowledge that Cotto bounced back from his heavy beating at the hands of Manny Pacquiao about as well as anyone could have. Cotto also looked brilliant at times, outboxing Yuri Foreman, dominating Ricardo Mayorga and in avenging his loss against his arch nemesis, Antonio Margarito. Cotto's left hook, to the head and in particular, to the body, may be one of the best single shots in all of boxing. Cotto also has underrated boxing skills, which he displayed well at times against Shane Mosley and in stopping Margarito last time out.I consider Cotto to be a very good fighter, who would be competitive with just about any other fighter in or around his weight class....who isn't named Floyd Mayweather. A quick look at the one dimensional nature of Cotto's last three opponents suggests to me that he could be in for a rude awakening against an opponent who possesses a kaleidoscope of boxing variances.

Having watched the Mayweather-Cotto 24/7, Miguel Cotto's trainer, Pedro Diaz, made a very bold statement that stuck with me. He claimed that he did not believe in improvisation. In other

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words, Diaz is a believer that he has a strategical gameplan, one that Miguel Cotto will bring with him to the ring on Saturday, hoping that it will reveal the offensive code which will allow him to crack open Mayweather's defensive safe. Admittedly, I too am a firm believer that tactics are the key to problem solving in boxing. Some of the most surprising upsets in boxing history have been won well before the fight, through an analytical approach by the fighter and their trainer - Max Schmeling's knockout of Joe Louis because of a defensive lapse after his jab, Ken Norton's jab parrying win over Muhammad Ali and Bernard Hopkins' left hook disappearing act clinic against Felix Trinidad, to name a few. But against the most layered fighter on the planet? If Diaz does not believe in improvisation, then he must not be fully aware of what he and Cotto will be faced with this Saturday.

To use a Bruce Lee quote - "It is difficult to have a rehearsed routine to fit in with broken rhythm. Rehearsed routines lack the flexibility to adapt." I consider Mayweather to be - alongside Andre Ward - the most adaptive fighter in boxing. For every Cotto action, there will be a Mayweather reaction. In other words, if Miguel Cotto does indeed have a strategy that is causing Mayweather early concern, I would fully expect Mayweather to have it figured out not long after. Then what? Cotto would have to then be able to readjust to Mayweather's adjustment. That's why Mayweather has the upper hand over nearly every fighter he faces. There are times, however, when an opponent's A game can be sufficient. Prime example being, I still believe Paul Williams' length, southpaw stance, jab and volume would give Floyd plenty to think about as would Pacquiao's unpredictable attacks coming from unconventional angles. However, that's not to say Mayweather wouldn't be able to do the same to them as he has to 42 others who have tried. My point is, these fighters would be doing what is customary to them against Mayweather. I have a feeling we will see a different Cotto on Saturday, at least for awhile.

If we go back to 2007, when the demand for a Mayweather-Cotto fight was at its highest, perception then was that this would be a case of the classic boxer vs the pressure fighter. At the time, Mayweather was primarily a defensive specialist, whose elusiveness on the back foot pretty much eliminated any danger....avoiding risks equated to avoiding defeat. Miguel Cotto on the other hand, was almost exclusively a stalking, pressure puncher - seldom did he take a backward step. Back then, both fighters were unbeaten. Had they have fought at that time, I would have gone with Mayweather by decision. I think Mayweather's slipperiness, and faster hands would have kept the fight from becoming just that, a fight. Because Cotto would have been the fighter pressing the attack, he would have likely received the benefit of the doubt in the rounds that Mayweather was not as dominant in, as well as occasions when Mayweather's back would have been against the ropes, where Cotto would no doubt have been right there throwing his left hook the the body. The likely scenario here would have been that Mayweather's defensive fortress would have resulted in Cotto landing on nothing but gloves, forearms, elbows and shoulders - such is the nature of Mayweather's shoulder posture which protects his tucked in chin. As a result, the fight would have probably been closer than it really was, at least on the scorecards. Judges would have favoured Cotto's aggression as opposed to Mayweather's smoke and mirrors.

Time changes everything.

On Saturday night, I'm fully anticipating a role reversal. I expect Cotto - the former pressure

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fighter - to be the fighter moving, and Mayweather - the former mover - to be the pressure fighter. Like I mentioned earlier, Mayweather is such an astute student of the game that he knows now is the right time to fight Miguel Cotto. You see, Mayweather is a master of psychology. He is an illusionist inside the ring and out. On numerous occasions during the promotional work, we have seen Mayweather constantly bring up the first Margarito fight and the Manny Pacquiao fight - claiming that Cotto is really undefeated. Like a great magician, he has taken our attention away from what is most important and what is real.

Out of sight, out of mind.

By focusing on Cotto's defeats to Margarito and Pacquiao, Mayweather has taken the attention away from two other revealing Miguel Cotto outings - the Shane Mosley and Joshua Clottey fights. I have no doubt that events that occurred in these bouts influenced Mayweather's decision in choosing Miguel Cotto as his next opponent. There are many who believe that Cotto lost to both Mosley and Clottey; Mosley landed 53% of his power shots against Cotto, while Clottey's punch stat numbers dwarfed Cotto's - Clottey was 222/622 with a 35% connect rate, while Cotto was 179/723 with a 25% connect rate. Of course, as everyone is aware, the punch stat numbers do not tell the whole story of a fight, but they do in this case illustrate that Cotto was involved in two highly disputed contests against fighters who are, quite frankly, not in Mayweather's class. Against both fighters, Cotto was hit over and over by right hands. There are two reasons for this:

The first reason, Cotto is a converted southpaw, his left hand, which is his dominant hand, is his lead hand. Because he is looking to throw it more often than his right hand, it is always in a semi offensive position, away from his chin, thus making it easier to land a right hand.

The second reason, when Cotto throws his left hook, he does so with his shoulders squared up to his opponent, as a result of it traveling from his lead hand. Now while Cotto has to wing that shot around to generate leverage, he is wide open for a straight right hand down the middle. Sometimes, victory or defeat can come down to the simplest of things. Also evident in these fights, especially the Shane Mosley fight, was Cotto's inability to fight effectively whilst backing up. Up until the ninth round against Shane Mosley, Cotto had been applying pressure, and forcing Mosley to back up. Once Mosley knew he could withstand Cotto's fire, Mosley proceeded to press his own attack. The result? Miguel Cotto unable to synchronize his legs and his hands - the essence of being a boxer/puncher. This has now been apparent against Mosley, Margarito, Clottey, Pacquiao and will also be apparent against Mayweather.

Don't waste motion. Keep it simple.

Since his hiatus, which ended when Mayweather returned to fight Juan Manuel Marquez in 2009, Floyd has adopted a far more efficient way of fighting. Once a fleet footed mover who threw almost every punch in the book, Floyd now spends most of his time standing in the pocket, limiting his offensive attack to nothing but a jab and a right hand lead - almost like when we discovered there was no need to fly around our living rooms in order to be successful at Wii tennis, the same results can be achieved whilst sitting comfortably in our chair {a strange analogy, but hopefully you see my point!}. Mayweather is such a sensational defensive artist that

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we sometimes take for granted just how good he is on offense. The counterpunching Mayweather of the past has been replaced by a far more deliberate version. I now view Mayweather as more of an offensive interceptor, rather than just a defensive counterpuncher. In the past, you would often see Mayweather invite his opponent's offense onto him, where he would allow them to complete their offensive technique and perform a slip, duck, parry or a shoulder roll before launching a counter. These days whilst moving forward, Mayweather's punch anticipation, along with his acute sense of timing, allows him to intercept his opponent's attack, just as they are about to throw - he doesn't allow his opponent to complete their offensive technique. The Mayweather of the Diego Corrales fight may have been more aesthetically pleasing, but the current version of Mayweather - more Monzon than Pep - maybe even tougher to beat, especially for Miguel Cotto.

I would like nothing more on Saturday night than to bear witness to a close, competitive fight. Unfortunately, I just can't see it going that way. I think Mayweather's current fighting style is a conflict for Miguel Cotto if ever there was one. Cotto's best chance of winning the fight is to land his left hook. It's a punch that must resurface for him on Saturday night. However, landing that will prove easier said than done as Mayweather's defense is almost designed to nullify circular, lead hand power punches - Mayweather has his right elbow protecting his body while his right glove and left shoulder are guarding his face.

Once Mayweather has figured out the way Cotto is moving and reacting to his own movement, I think we may see the most aggressive Mayweather performance since the Gatti fight. Many will disagree and point to the advantages in size and punching power that Cotto will have over Mayweather, which will make him reluctant to press the attack. Don't be fooled, Mayweather may not be as heavy as Cotto, but he may actually be the bigger and stronger of the two - Mayweather is taller and has a longer reach than Cotto and I would also encourage everyone to take a look at Mayweather's body against Oscar De La Hoya at junior middleweight, and against Marquez, at around the welterweight limit. Notice how much bigger Floyd looks against Marquez, as opposed to the way he looked against Oscar. Despite weighing less, Mayweather's upper body - his shoulders and chest - appear to have developed as Mayweather now looks more physically imposing since his return.

Prediction:

There are not going to be many opportunities to land anything worthwhile in a fight with Floyd Mayweather. I've always felt that if Mayweather ever happens to taste defeat, it will be down to speed, unpredictability and educated footwork. First, Mayweather needs to be kept in his defensive shell - even tougher now, as he is a lot more offensive minded - second, you have to use feints, to create openings, and third, you have to have the footwork to be able to move in and out and around his defensive construct. When I look at Miguel Cotto, I see a mechanical fighter, who does not possess the kind of hand and footspeed co-ordination that would be needed to outfox Mayweather.

I think Pedro Diaz will instruct Cotto, to the surprise of many, to come out moving and try and box with Mayweather - which will be a mistake. Cotto has all the tools, but he struggles to put everything together. He can box, he can move, but he can't box and move, which he would

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have to combine against Floyd. After his customary slow start, Mayweather will begin pressing the attack, throwing jabs and his straight right hands from behind his patented guard. Cotto, who fights well when under control, can not fight backing up. Mayweather will no doubt know this already, and will set about making sure that Cotto is always on his back foot.

The saying goes, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. At some stage in the fight, I expect Cotto to resort back to his former self and try and get the better of Floyd in close, where he will find nothing but a far more refined fighter at close quarters. By the middle to late rounds, Mayweather will be pushing hard for the stoppage - the 8oz glove request is not to be underestimated, Mayweather would love nothing more than to top Pacquiao's effort over Cotto. With Cotto's face showing signs of the most effective punch in boxing, Mayweather's right hand, the corner and official will be keeping a close eye. Mayweather has promised something spectacular throughout the build up to the fight, and for once, I believe him.

Mayweather will put on his most aggressive display in years, in topping Pacquiao's 12th round stoppage over Cotto, with a knockout victory of his own by around the 10th round.

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deepwater says:

I really hope that cotto can win. too bad "hope" doesnt win fights. Im going with 50 cents girlfriend on this one. 12 round maj dec with some glimmers of "hope" from cotto. hope and change has now been replaced with the hitler youth slogan of "forward" so looking "forward" hopefully 50's girlfriend and pac man will fight before its too late.

Radam G says:

Quite a long piece. I have quite a long response. Anyway! Money May is good at his optical illusions in and out of that squared jungle. He got the fool on many of the naive and those who just enjoying being Money May's fools, intentionally or just by pure luv of the man. I got much luv for Money May myself, but I'm not a fool for JACK!

Matter of a fact, Jacks wouldn't be syet in this day and time and fading of the whup-a\$\$ game. Oh, YES! The game has become lame. I'm beginning to believe that cable-station talking heads and cyberspace scribes have got in to fit in and don't care or understand the science and/or art of whup-a\$\$ professional pugilism. They stick together like a perfect turd and sell syet.

The talking heads and scribes are just spittin' bullsh*tology and poppycock and are getting away with that "Alvin the chipmunk" jive, like 40-plus thieves in the night. For that concern, ton

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of fudging thieves in broad daylight.

Amid all of this Money May's super-hyped HBO/24-7 about being "ready to die" in the ring, he ain't gonna do HOLY SH*T, but the usual of just enough to win. Wow! In recent years dude has only knocked down or knocked out smaller fighters coming up in weight.

He knocked down Juan Manuel Marquez, who came up two weight divisions to fight him. But Money May couldn't knock him out, even though Money May cheated on the agreed upon catchweight and came in near a darn heavyweight. [I'm being a bit sarcastic and hyperbolic for those haters, who are slow on the draw of thinking and comprehension, and are gettin edgy to jump up in my shiny grill.]

Money May kayoed Vicious Victor Ortiz, who was fighting at welterweight for the second time, despite that the fanboyish talking heads and cyberspace scribes were spittin' jive-turkey bullsh*tology that Vicious Vic was BIGGER than Money May. WTF! Try that weak-arse optical illusion on a real scarecrow without a brain. Money May was/is a long-time comfortable welterweight. The Vicious knucklehead was new -- and still is -- at that division. [Hum! Yup! My grandfather heard weak-arse talking heads and fanboys saying that the old Mongoose Archie Moore was bigger than Rocky Marciano. The Rock KAYOED the Mongoose's pseudo-oversized a\$\$, remindful of Money May kayoing Vicious Victor's small-brained pseudo-oversized a\$\$.]

I doubt that anyone is kayoed in this Money May-Miguel Cotto fiasco. As in his last two bouts, Money May is going to be slow walking and punch missing, and all his groupies, flunkies, fanboys, faders and fam are going to CLAIM that he look ageless and better than ever. YUP! I hear the same dumb syet about my icon and godfather, GOAT Ali back in toddler-and-Kid-Radam day, but I didn't believe or accept that wanting-things-to-be-the-same-forever bullsh*t.

I'm reminded of the lyrics in a song: "Everythin' must change. Nuffin' [sic] remains da same." The only place that you will find the same Money May of 1999 to 2007 is on video, film, dvr and in the memories of your brain. That is, if that muthasucka is probably working correctly up in your cranium. Hehehehehe!

Nostalgia about primetime Money May and reminiscing quotes and viewing old visual footage about him have made a lot of muthafudgers stone outta their fudging heads -- bits of a song that a pugilist-turn singer wrote. Holla!

deepwater says:

lol.hey radam, mayweather is ready to die for 50 cent. they are in love

Radam G says:

@Deepwater, you don't trust 50 cent and neither should Baby -- I mean Money -- May! Fifty Cent is a darn Judas. Do you ever wonder why his teeth are so Asian BIG? Oh YES! Dat sucka got some big, ole whites that make even Asians like myself say WHAT DA DOUBLE FUDGE!

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See, we Asian got some big whites and are proud of it. We can blind muthasuckas with a big shinny grin or smile.

I'm always getting my investigation jive on. I love to know before I flow. Holla at "Finding Your Roots: Fifty Cent" and see that his arse is the straight-up descendant of Asian Mongolian slaves that U.S. Southern slavers use to import from Mongolia, along with the black slaves from West Africa to South Carolina. I syet you not. I'm always on my Ps and Qs. I never spit or make up poppycock and HBO-style bullsh*tology. And I'm big time the opposite of Uncle Roger's ranting and raving about "most people don't syet 'bout boksini!" I be all up in the boxers' and their sidekicks' origins and roots and ____ ____!

I'd not be surprised the least bit if and when Judas Fifty Cent do dat betrayal thing on boxing Jesus Money May. Judas Fifty Cent point out all of Money May's steroid cheating and other jive and come get with Fifty Cent's Asian roots.

@SCLA Ali, in advance, STFU! Don't start cryin' and carryin' on and syet. Hehehe! YUP! I know a whole lot of secrets. Did I ever tell you about ____ ____ ____ ____! Hahahaha! Holla!

ali says:

Deepwater knock it off you've seen Ms. Jackson his finance is fine *** hell.

SouthPaul says:

Fun late night read. Thanks to the author. We boxing fans appreciate the effort.

[B]

Radam[/B]

Same to you, good reads coming from your end.

I just peeped out the MGM Grand arrival photos. If you didn't know any better it appears Mayweather is the natural junior middleweight. Looks fit, solid, and a bit muscled up. Healthy and well rested appearance. Cotto, IMO, looks a bit tired and gaunt. A lil' sucked up type look to him. Possibly overtrained by the scientific approach by the Cubano? He has that dude running and doing all sorts of doggie tricks. Who knows, did he leave it all in the gym?

amayseng says:

@soutpaul, i agree i was wondering earlier in the week if cotto will be over trained by fight night..

@radam G, what is your prediction of the fight?

Radam G says:

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I don't really have a prediction -- just an expectation of the usual -- excuses about how this fiasco didn't quite live up to HBO's talking heads' expectations, but "On his way to jail, Money May shows again how and why he is the pound-for-pound best on the planet." [YUP! What planet? The one that is in the imaginations of fanboys, flunkies, floozies and _____! Because nowhere on earth where people got an iota of a brain and know that Money May is a very small d***, and on Da Manny, he ducks quick [sic].]

YUP! And HBO is still full of hyper humbuggery bullsh*tology operating and need to STFU! But then again, more power to it. Because it's all about making that moola off those muthasuckas and dey know-nothing posses born every minute. Holla!

lilhamp49 says:

Yes,yes I agree with the article 100%. I have to say that back in those day we cotto was coming up and was undefected. I was a little nervous for my Icon (Floyd) to fight cotto although I felt in my heart that Money Mayweather would find a way to win because of his defences still. Now I have no doubt what so ever that stance group and end up backing cotto up to his demines. I really don't have any-thing against cotto and he seems look a likeable guy. I have 63 years old African american that have been following fights since I saw my daddy cry went we like and listen to the radio when Joe Louis lost to Marciano. I remember see floyd senior fight and back then he was not a really bad fighter as money Floyd say I saw lots more of roger's fights and we all know that was a hell of a fighter, then flody took to a new level, using money floyd's words.

I lot of people my disagree but in my opinion, Money,Pretty Boy Mayweather may go down as one of the best fighter of all times and certainly the best defence ever or may The best ever. Just me & Floyd's may think He problem right now is the best ever barring none.

gibola says:

Never thought this was a competitive fight and was amazed Cotto's people agreed to it. The only explanation is it's Cotto's retirement fight. I don't think anyone outside his immediate circle thinks he's got much chance (and probably a few inside know he hasn't but they need the cheque!). He'll give it a good go - he'll get busted up and retire after 7/8 rounds and bearing in mind the wars he's seen I hope he decides enough is enough and he retreats to PR to enjoy his millions.

wicketw says:

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character? Nicely these days we've answer of the whole query.

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