



You can spend hours studying the fight videos, absorbing the combatants' styles, every little intricacy, in hopes of assessing and accurately predicting how a matchup will play out. You scribble in your notebook something to the effect of, "Fighter A drops his right hand about six inches when he jabs, and Fighter B's strength is his quick counter hook, so B can hurt A with that as long as B can position himself far enough away to lure the jab out but close enough to reach A with the hook."

If you want to spend hours coming up with this sort of detailed X-and-O breakdown of this Saturday's fight between Andre Berto and Victor Ortiz, be my guest. But you're wasting your time.

This fight won't be won or lost with jabs or hooks or footwork or upper-body movement. It will be won or lost purely on the basis of will. Berto has it. In the quantities required to succeed at the upper levels of this brutal, unyielding, soul-crushing sport, Ortiz doesn't.

But here's the beautiful part: It's a marketable, meaningful TV fight. So congratulations to Andre Berto. Almost every fight he takes, he hears criticism from some corner of the boxing universe. But not this time. This time, all that Team Berto has done is go out and find the absolute perfect opponent in every way. They just have to hope Ortiz doesn't crumble so quickly and easily that Berto gets criticized after the fact.

None of this is meant to be sarcastic, some kind of "wink, wink" compliment where what I'm really saying is that Berto found another bum against which to pad his record. Ortiz is a talented fighter. (I was among those who believed he was an elite prospect as recently as two years ago, and I'm not going to lie about that now and tell you I was suspicious of him all along.) At just 24 years old, he already has a decent name built up, thanks to the hype before he lost to Marcos Maidana, the thrilling six rounds against Maidana, the conversation-sparking ending to the Maidana fight, and a second wave of hype as he tried to rebuild his image.

These are two gifted American boxers in their mid-20s, a matchup that is well worth HBO's money and air time.

## A Victor Lap For Andre Berto....RASKIN

Written by Eric Raskin  
Tuesday, 12 April 2011 15:04

---

It's a fight Berto would have been foolish not to take. Ortiz isn't Michel Trabant or Miki Rodriguez or Freddy Hernandez, an opponent that presents neither a positive progression in quality nor a compelling contest for the fans. It's a highly compelling fight on paper.

It just happens to be a fight in which only one of the two combatants has what it takes to win.

The stories have long been out there about Ortiz, how he doesn't respond well to getting hit and has more flight instinct than a professional boxer can afford to have. We shrugged those stories off as gym myths for a while. Then we came to believe those stories when Maidana convinced Ortiz to quit in the sixth round.

But I was willing to overlook that surrender and give "Vicious Victor" a second chance. Hey, Maidana is a beast. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that he's one-eighth grizzly bear or one-sixteenth Yeti. (Which would make Erik Morales some sort of intergalactic alien beast, apparently.) Toward the end of his fight with Maidana, Ortiz's eye had swollen just about shut and he couldn't get out of the way of the Argentine's right hand, so he opted for self-preservation. A fighter can show insufficient heart one time, feel the backlash slapping him, then dedicate himself to not letting it happen again—see Roberto Duran or Vitali Klitschko for high-profile examples.

But Ortiz lost my benefit of the doubt when, five fights after the Maidana defeat, he again revealed a missing ingredient against Lamont Peterson. No intricate X-and-O analysis was really required for this matchup; all Ortiz had to do was come forward and throw punches, and the fight was his. He scored two knockdowns in the third round by doing precisely that. But then he stopped doing it. He backed off, didn't punch enough. Ortiz was thinking way too much instead of acting on instinct. Or maybe it's just his instinct to think. If so, that's a problem.

Whatever happened, Ortiz turned a knockout win against Peterson into a majority draw. And now this guy is supposed to be able to cope with Berto, a 27-year-old in his prime who can punch, who's a full division bigger than Peterson, who showed against Luis Collazo and David Estrada and Carlos Quintana that he can handle adversity?

And if what we saw from Ortiz against Peterson set off alarm bells, that was nothing compared to what we heard from him on a recent media teleconference promoting the Berto fight.

Ortiz comment: "When everybody runs from you at 140, you go up to 147, and I shot for the top of the line, Andre Berto."

Reaction: Who exactly was running from Ortiz at 140, especially after he drew with Peterson? And since when is Berto the top of the line in a division featuring Manny Pacquiao?

Ortiz comment: "[Maidana is] running left and right, dodging me. He sees me in his nightmares. When he gets the courage and comes out of the closet, he can meet me at 147."

Reaction: When one man makes another throw in the towel, it's usually not the winner who has the nightmares. Also, "comes out of the closet" probably wasn't the most prudent wording.

## A Victor Lap For Andre Berto....RASKIN

Written by Eric Raskin  
Tuesday, 12 April 2011 15:04

---

Ortiz comment: "You say I haven't fought a puncher. Maidana was considered the toughest puncher at 140 and 147 and he couldn't put me down."

Reaction: So who was it exactly who did put Ortiz down in the first and sixth rounds of that fight? Is the whole "cause and effect" concept just some big government conspiracy?

I don't mean to belittle Ortiz or make personal attacks. He's a tougher man than I am and a world-class boxer. But his comments reveal him to be utterly delusional. If I was going to give him an outside chance at beating Berto, I'd need to hear that he tackled his demons head on, maybe that he had started working with a sports psychologist. But he's gone the opposite direction, denying that he has demons. And that reeks of a young athlete who lacks the emotional stability to succeed against top opponents.

Ortiz has developed a relationship with fellow Oxnard, California fighter Fernando Vargas. If you could somehow transplant Vargas' fighting spirit into Ortiz's body, he'd have a chance at defeating Andre Berto. I still wouldn't pick him, but I'd acknowledge that it's a fight either man can win.

Instead I see it as a fight only one man can win. Berto has found his dream opponent. And by Ortiz's confounding logic, that means Andre Berto will be seeing Ortiz in his nightmares someday soon.

Eric Raskin can be contacted at [RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com](mailto:RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com). You can follow him on Twitter @EricRaskin and listen to new episodes of his podcast, Ring Theory, at <http://ringtheory.podbean.com>

[Comment on this article](#)

### **ultimoshogun says:**

I too am leaning towards Berto for the win come saturday night. Unless Ortiz hits Berto with something he can't recover from I don't see him winning this one, especially if it turns into a real dogfight where they have to dig deep for the win...I gave him the benefit of the doubt after the Maidana loss, but for some reason he took his foot off the gas and allowed Peterson back in the fight...so, maybe Ortiz is just too nice for this sport or lacks that killer instinct. I guess we'll see this weekend.

### **DaveB says:**

I'm criticizing Berto for taking this fight. Why is he fighting jr. welterweights? He should be fighting the best 147 pounders. What is he waiting for at 27 years of age? I don't get. No wonder people criticize him.