Back around 2006 and 2007, when Miguel Cotto was tearing through the 140 and 147-lb weight classes, I would have bet the house on Miguel Cotto to beat Floyd Mayweather, Jr.

Cotto was made to pose a challenge to a fighter with the defensive brilliance that defines Pretty Boy Floyd.

When I first saw a full Cotto fight back in 2004 (they typically didn't last long), I was mesmerized. I couldn't believe the blend of power, speed, and accuracy. Offensively, he was a gift from the boxing heavens. What he lacked in defensive skills he made up for with aggressiveness and explosive punches from all angles.

Cotto is and always has been a brutally hard puncher. He didn't necessarily have the one-punch knockout power of Tommy Hearns' right hand, but he hit *hard*. And with both hands. If you don't believe me, ask Paulie Malignaggi. Better yet, just do a Google search looking for photos of his smashed orbital bone after fighting Cotto. Or ask Carlos Quintana, a solid, technically-sound southpaw who Cotto fought for an interim welterweight title back in 2006. Quintana seemed to be winning the early rounds against Cotto, but it was Quintana that looked like he was on the wrong end of a street fight after just four rounds. Cotto went on to stop him on a chilling body shot.

The body shot. Cotto's most potent weapon.

As his career evolved, Miguel Cotto continued hammering opponents with great body shots while improving on his ever-suspect defense. In 2007, he faced Shane Mosley, who still had plenty left in the tank at this point, in what was by far the stiffest test of his career. In a performance that lifted him into the boxing elite and pound-for-pound lists, Miguel Cotto boxed and landed heavy power punches utilizing both an orthodox and a southpaw stance. He landed on the inside, and he landed from the outside. In the late rounds, he was landing significant power punches to win the decision while moving backwards. He was out-boxing Shane Mosley. This was when Shane Mosley was still "Sugar" Shane Mosley.

This hungry version of Miguel Cotto would have been a nightmare for Floyd Mayweather, Jr. He would box, throw heavy leather with both hands, and constantly attack from all angles with great accuracy and subtle speed. Oscar De La Hoya was mildly successful in being able to pressure Floyd even though Oscar was well past his prime when they fought. Oscar even won that fight on one questionable scorecard. If Cotto had him on the ropes at this point, he would have ripped Mayweather's body until he was able to land up top. I just know it.

Unfortunately, the beating Cotto suffered at the hands of Antonio Margarito in their first fight has really taken a toll on him. I firmly believe that it was the lack of body punches from Cotto that made the difference that night. Margarito seemingly landed more body punches than Cotto threw. Would a few of Cotto's devastating body punches have turned the tide? Who knows? But

as a Cotto fan, I sure would like to have seen a few. Cotto's stoppage loss to Manny Pacquiao was as much a result of the Margarito beating as it was attributed to the fact that Joe Santiago was not equipped to be training Miguel Cotto for a Manny Pacquiao fight. He offered absolutely no tactical advice throughout that entire fight when some adjustments absolutely had to be made. Manny Pacquiao is the best fighter in the world, and you simply can't beat him without making adjustments.

Even if it seems like he's mentally recovered, having now stopped Margarito in their December 2011 rematch, this is not the same Miguel Cotto. He's slowed down a bit, lost his patented aggressiveness, and has become somewhat of a counter-puncher at this point. Even in the second fight against Margarito, it looked eerily similar to the first. Cotto landed at will, but he simply couldn't hurt the bigger man who kept stalking forwards. The only difference in the second fight was that Margarito has regressed dramatically. In addition to clearly having career-threatening eye issues, he has been a shot fighter since Shane Mosley knocked him around in a one-sided drubbing (in Margarito's first fight defending the title he won from Cotto… insert hand wraps scandal here).

I digress.

Cotto still allowed himself to be backed into the ropes, but Margarito was simply too slow to stop him from rolling out of danger this time. Floyd Mayweather, Jr. will not let you off the hook if you make a mistake. He'll make you pay like he did to Victor Ortiz. If anything, he'll bait Cotto into making mistakes by setting traps that only Floyd can set.

Floyd Mayweather, Jr. is one of the most polarizing figures in any sport today, but his greatness lies in the ring. He is the most dominant, technical, skilled, and natural defensive fighter I've ever seen. Floyd is always aware of exactly where he is in the ring, and is simply a master of his craft. Outside of punching power, Floyd Mayweather, Jr. does not lack a single boxing skill.

Mayweather's brilliance was on full display as he was just entering the prime of his HBO career in a fight against another defensively-limited fighter in Arturo Gatti. He laid such a savage beating on Gatti that it was hard to watch. As a fan of the fight game, seeing big punches doesn't make me squeamish. However, this was the single most one-sided beatdown I've ever seen in a sanctioned fight. Gatti was never Pernell Whitaker defensively, but seeing what a prime Floyd did to a faded Gatti was mystifying. He'd land six hard power punches cleanly by the time Gatti had the sense to cover up or return fire. It is his accuracy as much as it is his

hand speed that makes him such an elite fighter.

All Mayweather has done since that fight is dominate. Granted he hasn't necessarily fought the best boxing had to offer since then; Floyd Mayweather hasn't been in more than a few mildly competitive fights. That speaks more to his greatness than his selection of opponents.

I want Miguel Cotto to prove me wrong more than anything, but all I can see is the same outcome as his fight against Manny Pacquiao. It will be competitive for awhile, but Mayweather will take control around round five like he always does. He'll largely coast en route to a one-sided victory (if he stops him, it will be a TKO in the 11th) with precise right hands landing repeatedly. In all likelihood, we can add Miguel Cotto to a growing list of fighters that could have once given Mayweather a good fight, only to get their chance once they are past their athletic prime.

I sure hope Manny Pacquiao doesn't make that list as well. It's a sad truth in boxing, but the one fight everyone wants is Floyd vs. Pacman. It is the only one that has questions to be answered. Where does that fight take place? In the center of the ring? On the outside? Who's the stronger man? These are questions we all want to know now while both fighters still seem to be at the peak of their pugilistic prowess.

Personally, I think Manny would beat Floyd Mayweather. I don't think it's fair to use the transitive property when comparing their respective fights vs. Juan Manuel Marquez. Styles definitely do make fights, and JMM and Manny were made to fight one another.

While Victor Ortiz posed no threat to Floyd, seeing him get off combinations with Floyd against the ropes (although only landing with his head), I'm convinced that Manny could employ the same strategy but land with effectiveness. Ortiz is a very good prizefighter, but Manny is a once-in-a-lifetime fighter. So is Floyd Mayweather. They both are deadly accurate with extremely fast hands. It's so rare for the two best fighters of a generation to be in the same weight class, and it would be an epic shame for us to really not know who wins that fight until one of them is past their prime. Come on, Bob, come on Floyd, come on Manny, make it happen.

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Money May is no longer all dat and a bag of chips. He hangs along the rope himself with his now stiff-arse legs. So it may be him backing into the rope instead of Miguel Cotto. Depending on what MC's trainer Doc Diaz does, this fight may be a half-way decent bout. Holla!

ali says:

This is fight is going to have a lot of fireworks ...Mayweather fights in the pocket about 90% of the time now and that's a good thing for Cotto cause that will give him a chance to work on the inside and get off that left hook to the body (which is his 2nd best punch now) ...Mayweather is a damn good fighter on the inside also and think he's going bang with Cotto I see Mayweather using a lot of uppercuts on inside...On the outside Mayweather has all the advantages for the most part but if Cotto jab is landing this fight will be way more difficult for Floyd then people think.

brownsugar says:

That's absolutely correct Ali,... Cotto is not anywhere near done. It's a very dangerous fight and Cotto will enter the ring comfy and full of tactics... he didn't out box a near prime Mosely without getting shook once because he has a lack of skills... Cotto has radar,.. Cotto has guts... Cotto has strategy... and he's one of the premier scientists of the sport in his corner... Look out Mayweather... Recess is Over!!!!!!

ali says:

Wow!!!!B-sug over a 1000 post...a true legend on TSS

brownsugar says:

Hey Ali I'm appreciatin' your posts.... you put it together in a very accessible way...keep it up!... When it comes to May vs Cotto..... anybody expecting a weak and withered Cotto... closing up shop early is gonna be in for a real surprise.. this is a real fight. better now than never. I said it before and like yourself and others.... I'll say it again, Cotto is no walkover for anybody...especially at 154lbs(why do you think Pac and company refused, don't answer that,... you already know), Cotto aint sugar ray or duran but he's one of the best tactical boxers alive today. this is not going to be a one sided schooling like May gave Ortiz...Cotto is a grown a$$ man... and watch him carry himself as such. and watch the best come out of Mayweather. At least with what he has left to bring to the table which should still be more than enough..... a long hot, grueling night of boxing the HARD WAY.

Radam G says:

@light-skinned SCLA Ali, whadup wif dat? What happened to a "WOW" for a Pinoy when he got a thou? Just shuckin' and jivin!'

@B-Sug, about time. I've been waitin' on you for a bit. Now the Roast need to get in the fit.

@Editor Mike, when are you gonna officially holla out that the Roast was da MAN for 2011? Da cat deserves a piece of TSSU's ROTY heaven. Holla!

dino da vinci says:

@everybody. Yes. Yes. Yes. & Yes. Cotto no walk in the park. Sugar second to 1,000. Meant to mention that a bit earlier. But the best part is the great insight. Rad remains the man. Warning: Parential Viewership Advised. Radam, you G man you. I may not be the next to 1,000, but I will catch you by year's end. That was one of my New Year's resolutions. Along with learning Spanish and an instrument. And saving Boxing. And World Peace.

And Radam, don't worry. No four words and a happy face either. Meaty stuff. Stuff that people are free to disagree with. But shouldn't.

Larry Merchant says:

I plan to ask a series of confusing, ignorant, and often times offensive questions to both fighters after the bout!

ali says:

Radam even though I hardly agree with anything u post u r a TSS legend also... over 1700 post and counting is impressive triple OG.

Radam G says:

Thanks for da kudos, but you be hatin' my syet. Whaddup wif dat? I'm agreeable like a dog and a cat. I guess Uncle Snoop Dogg and I are going to have to roll up on 38th and Middleton: LAID BACK! And "sippin' juice and gin." Hehehehe! Just kidding. You will probably sh*t your pants. Holla!

ali says:

Triple OG im looking forward to seeing if u can back up all the **** you be talking lol!!

dino da vinci says:

@Radam. Laid back. With my mind on my money and my money on my mind. One of the great lines in all of songdom.

undisputed34 says:

maybe there is something wrong with me but im just not seeing it. cotto's heart has always been unquestionable, but in my opinion, he was always a B fighter when compared to other world

class fighters around his weight, getting hurt by guys that shouldnt have been able to get in a position to hurt him and battering guys that he was supposed to. he reminds me of delahoya in that delahoya made fights with all that top guys that he shouldve but came up short. smashing paulie malinaggi? big whoop. beating shane? yes he fought a fresher shane than may and pacman, i give him that, but its not like he faced the shane vernon forrest pummelled or pound for pound shane. all i see is a miguel cotto who may do slightly better than the 2007 version because the beatdowns he's taken have made him slightly less risk prone. he didnt do anything in beating yuri foreman, ricardo mayorga and margarito that should convince anyone, much less the boxing guys on this site, that he can make floyd do anything floyd doesnt want to do. in my opinion, and in the words of larry holmes "cotto couldnt carry tito's jockstrap", much less floyds. perhaps someone can give me a reason to believe otherwise?

brownsugar says:

undisputed... I guess beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder. Mayorga was nearly a lightheavyweight when he stepped into the ring with Cotto, If you remember Mayorga also clowned on Mosely who took 12 rounds to get him out of there... Cotto did it in 10 or 11 rounds without falling prey to Mayorga's wildman tactics... and essentially crushed him with one blow. Cotto fought a tactical fight against Foreman who is more boxer than brawler. Cotto beat him to the punch and outslicked the slick boxer untill the fights conclusion. Foreman never came back from that beating and continued to slide after that fight. Cotto usually rises to the challenge in every fight. he proved human against Margarito in their first fight... we'll never know but I never saw Cotto react to punches like he did against Margarito,.. he had welts on his back, ribs and even shoulders, everywhere Margarito hit him.... strange. Now Cotto is revived and renewed, fighting at a comfortable weight and earning the biggest check of his career... he's boxing good and using his ring intelligence more instead of just rushing in, which is a sign that he's adapting to the slight physical decline boxers have at his age... I think the world will be satisfied with what Cotto brings to the table against Mayweather. And I believe he'll bring out the Best in Mayweather.... Mayweather is going to the next level in this fight.... like he was on the way to doing in the Ortiz fight before the premature ending.
As far as Tito goes... I think he's overrated. Sure he was exciting, more puncher than boxer.. but against Del La Hoya he was easily out classed and exposed as having crude skills. Tito was never the boxer that Cotto is,.. he just had raw power. His foray into the middleweight division proved how vunerable he was when his power was taken out of the equation. Good figher, yes,.. but not as good a boxer as Cotto. If they fought in their early prime I could see Tito bombing Cotto out of there,.. but past 29 or 30 years old I could see Cotto smoothly out boxing him.

Shoulder Roll Defense says:

I love Cotto because he is a great ambassador of the sport of boxing. However, Mayweather has too much hand speed and guile for the Puerto Rican, therefore I expect a easy UD in favor of Mayweather. When I say easy, I mean 9 rounds in favor of Mayweather and 3 in favor of Cotto, but I wouldn't be shocked if Mayweather ended the fight via late round TKO.

undisputed34 says:

@ b-sug...youre right about about beauty being in the eye of the beholder...if cotto is to be considered great, i just want to put it into perspective. if he's to be considered great, the i guess an argument can be made for him being great the way tommy hearns is considered great; he had the tools but came up short against the other greats of his era (sugar ray, marvin hagler) the difference being those guys were undisputably great, whereas i cant point to anyone on cotto's resume that can be considered great except for pacman and we all know of the shellacking he took there. we could even say that margarito was cotto's iran barkley. Ok, cotto got mayorga out of there a round or two before an old sugar shane...i worked out with mayorga once in a gym in florida and i have to say that he comes to work. but he drinks beer and smokes right after. i thought that was a gimmick that he used to pull in the ring, but i guess not. mayorga is a tough night for anyone but a great he isnt. and light heavy or not, he didnt face the mayorga that had his way with vernon forrest. or even the one who got destroyed by tito. didnt foreman tear his ACL in the fight with cotto? i mean, a W is a W, but he fought a guy who lost the biggest part of his arsenal, his legs, and came out victorious. thats what he's supposed to do. i like cotto as a fighter. he never fails to give an exciting fight win or lose. but i just think people are taking something thats good and attempting to make it great.im not necessarily a tito fan but overrated? thats a little much, dont you think? he was much more dominant than cotto and while he got outclassed by delahoya (who i think would have done the same to cotto, while probably stopping him) and stopped by a much fresher Bhop, i cant forsee cotto faring much better in either of those cases. im also relatively certain that had a welter tito and margarito met, margarito wouldnt have seen the final bell. to some it all up, if i had to choose one word to sum cotto up, that word would be: vulnerable. cotto has had a successful career and will probably get into HOF someday and i wont say that he doesnt deserve it. but what i will say is that he has been life and death against more than one fighter that wasnt in his class and the ones that were almost killed him. that doesnt equal great to me. i think he'll make as good a fight as he can, but i dont see cotto doing anything that will separate him from the long list of mayweather victims. i cant wait for the fight to happen so we can all meet back here and dissect it..