

Miguel Cotto Grows Old at 32

Written by Thomas Hauser
Tuesday, 04 December 2012 22:30



Years ago, Patrick Kehoe wrote, “We must be ever vigilant to record the truths and meanings that take place in the boxing ring.”

With that in mind, let’s take a look at Miguel Cotto’s December 1st outing against Austin Trout at Madison Square Garden.

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Cotto has fought with honor as a professional boxer for twelve years. At his best, he could choose between outboxing opponents and mauling them in the trenches. He was always willing to go in tough.

Miguel followed Felix Trinidad as the standard bearer for Puerto Rican boxing. He's soft-spoken with aura of dignity about him. An awareness of the gravity of what he does for a living is etched on his face. The desire for self-improvement through hard work has been a constant in his life. Late in his ring career, Cotto decided to learn English. To have learned it as well as he has at an advanced age is a significant accomplishment.

Cotto-Trout was Miguel's eighth fight at Madison Square Garden, where he has been a profitable franchise for seven years. Team Cotto and Golden Boy (the lead promoter for the fight) were priming Miguel for a big-money outing against Canelo Alvarez in Las Vegas on May 4, 2013. Viewed in that light, the choice of Trout as an opponent was a high-risk low-reward gamble. Austin is the kind of fighter who would always have given Miguel trouble. His 25-and-0 record had been built against limited opposition. But he's a tall elusive southpaw with skills.

Also, Cotto's power hasn't carried well to 154 pounds. Opponents at 140 said that his hook to the body felt like an iron wrecking ball. Opponents at 154 take his punches and return fire.

Fighters rarely say that they aren't as good as they used to be. But at the final pre-fight press conference for Cotto-Trout, Miguel acknowledged, "I'm getting older. Everybody knows it. I just want to be the best myself that I can be."

British promoter Frank Warren once observed, "The knockout punch is about perfect timing. So is matchmaking; picking the right guy at the right time."

Many believed prior to Cotto-Trout that the selection of Austin as Miguel's opponent was the product of careless matchmaking.

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There's a special feel to a night at the fights at Madison Square Garden. But Cotto-Trout never caught on as a must-see promotion. There were 21,239 fans in the arena when Miguel exacted revenge against Antonio Margarito last December. This time, the announced attendance was 13,096 and the atmosphere was far less torrid.

Despite being the fighter with a belt, Trout entered the ring first and was introduced first as well. Then the action began.

During fight week, Miguel had looked older than his thirty-two years. When he got in the ring, he still looked older.

Cotto was the aggressor early in the fight. He knows how to cut off a boxing ring, and he worked the body nicely when he got inside. But for the most part, Trout kept him at bay with good footwork and a stiff jab. By round six, Miguel was visibly tiring. Then he stopped pushing the pace, which allowed Austin equal say in the flow of the fight.

In the second half of the bout, Cotto gave it all he had. He seemed to dig deeper than Trout. But as the Gospel According to St. Matthew recounted in a somewhat different context, Miguel's spirit was willing but his flesh was weak. The reserves of strength simply weren't there.

The scoring of the judges was a lopsided 119-109, 117-111, 117-111 in Trout's favor. Most ringside observers (including this one) thought the fight was closer than that. But one was hard-pressed to find an impartial observer who thought that Miguel had won.

After the fight, Cotto told the media, "I still have boxing in my mind. I just want to rest with my family the rest of the year. I never make excuses. I accept my defeats and I learn from them and I just move forward."

What Miguel should learn from this fight is that it might be time to retire. He's still a capable fighter. There will always be a sanctioning body eager to designate a Miguel Cotto fight as a "world championship" bout (for a sanctioning fee, of course). But he isn't Miguel Cotto in the ring anymore and never will be again.

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Cotto is an “old” thirty-two. Twelve years of professional boxing on top of a high-profile amateur career have put considerable wear and tear on his body. The beatings he suffered at the hands of Antonio Margarito and Manny Pacquiao took something out of him, physically and psychologically, that will never be restored. He can fight on as a name opponent in the manner of Shane Mosley, winning some and losing some while taking debilitating blows to the brain. Or he can retire with dignity and look back on his career at a job well done.

Billy Graham, who trained Ricky Hatton from his first pro fight through the glory years of Hatton’s career, once said, “The last thing I want for my fighters is longevity. Longevity takes a fighter into dangerous waters.”

Miguel Cotto should ask himself, “How much money is enough? How many more blows to the head in the gym and in fights should I take before I say, ‘It’s over.’”

* * *

On another note –

As traditional news outlets cut back on boxing coverage, the Internet is keeping the sport alive. It’s an anything-goes environment. Truth and misinformation are often found side-by-side. The power of a media outlet frequently counts for more than the quality of the work it hosts. There are no barriers to entry, so the universe of blogs, columns, and websites keeps expanding. Unfortunately, some very good writing is lost in the sludge.

Boxing fans should Google the names of Bart Barry, Carlos Acevedo, Jimmy Tobin, and Hamilton Nolan and get to know their writing. It’s very good.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book (*And the New: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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[Comment on this article](#)

Carmine Cas says:

Cotto has aged, but perhaps he overlooked Trout

Radam G says:

Everybody ages. But not grow old in the same way. Aging doesn't mean jack. Miguel Cotto still has mad boksing Mack. Dude is a boksing brickhouse. But he fought like a louse. And on his arse, from that amateur trainer in MC's corner, there was no proper fighting plan to douse. MC coulda done better with Minny Mouse.

Miguel Cotto needs to quit wanting to be in total charge and get a professional boxing trainer to whip his arse into elite-fighting shape. Pat Burns or Teddy Atlas or Cotto's Uncle or SOG's trainer Hunter would serve MC well, and he'd upset the red-headed hype.

MC still has plenty in the tank. And he best get the correct trainer if he keeps wanting to take big purses to the bank. Holla!

Spinach Chin says:

Very familiar article. Same thing was written about many a great fighter who'd been buried while still alive. Austin Trout had a lot more to do with the outcome that this writer will cede. Cotto deserves praise for borrowing the Holyfield doctrine: You fight them ALL. Even if you know they'll make you look bad. Had Cotto avoided Trout, this same writer would roast him for avoiding tough fights. Here's hoping guys like Cotto ignore keyboard tappers and fight as long as he chooses to.

Carmine Cas says:

Cotto is the man, I'd love to see him hook up with Virgil Hunter. Get his *** in better shape and improve his defense.

Carvalho says:

Sensible article by a great writer. Cotto deserves to retire. He has repeatedly searched his limit and found it several times. No shame on loses, then. A brave an honest career -rare thing nowadays at top level. He should be proud of it. I'm sincerely thankful.

The Good Doctor says:

I do agree with the adage that in this sport you get old in one fight however I am not sure it applies here. Cotto didn't look great, he looked average. I think alot of this has to do with the

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weight class. 154 is too big for Cotto. He fought a semi skilled guy that was 5 years younger, 3 inches taller with a 6-7 inch reach advantage and add that to a guy who probably outweighed him by at least 10lbs.. For a guy Cotto's size, I am not sure he wins even if he fights the perfect fight with those disadvantages. I am a huge Cotto fan but I feel 147 should be his max.

deepwater says:

cotto is really 147 not a 154 er. styles make fights. cotto has a couple more fights left. i would put him 50-50 with canelo still.

ali says:

If Cotto is really 147 and is too small for 154 then why do yall think it's a 50/50 with Canelo. I hope the fight still does happen cause Canelo is going to show yall what's up.

SouthPaul says:

I'm with my nugga' Ali... Hoping the fight still comes off and from all reports ...it is. Viva Puerto Rico! Cheering for Cotto but ain't blinded by the love...he likely getting ktfo.

brownsugar says:

Yes Cotto is not the same as he was,.. but he's still better than most. That's why established fighters fight each other... because they know they'll get outclassed by some of the better young guys.

Even so.... if Trout wasn't naturally 15-20 bigger than Cotto, and didn't have the same height and reach advantage..Cotto could have gotten inside and traded more. You just can't beat a bigger dude with equal or better skills.

Now Cotto did make it a contest but he fell short.

Put Canelo in the ring with Cotto and he'll fare better than Mosely or anybody else Canelo has fought.

Cotto can move but he's not a natural floater like Mayweather used to be... when he's moving it's like he's jogging instead of floating...There's a difference. In the past he never had to dance so much and while he's proficient at it... he's not a natural.

The only way Canelo will beat Cotto is if he can walk through his punches.. which he may be able to do.

but Canelo doesn't have a chance with somebody as fluid and mobile as Trout.

deepwater says:

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[QUOTE=ali;23148]If Cotto is really 147 and is too small for 154 then why do yall think it's a 50/50 with Canelo. I hope the fight still does happen cause Canelo is going to show yall what's up.[/QUOTE]

because I don't think that much of Canelo. I see Cotto getting amped up against Canelo because of the pr vs Mexico thing. Styles make fights and Canelo won't be slick like trout.

ali says:

I totally disagree Canelo is slicker than most people give him credit for. Alvarez's problem is he forgets about from time to time because his offense is so good. But against Cotto he will know better his boxing I.Q. is very underestimated. I can pretty much guarantee Canelo is going to KO Cotto, Cotto will have his moments but it won't be enough to beat a young lion like Canelo.

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Radam G says:

It is boxing savvy, not I.Q. IQ is a test score that you get by doing well on a test that you study from a book. Canelo didn't study boxing from any accredited college or academy. He was gym taught. Give him a boxing IQ test and he will probably score 25 out of a possible 200 points. But give him a boxing savvy test and he will probably score a 99 out of a possible 100 points.

C'mon SCLA Ali and others! This Universe is TSS, not weak-@ss Fighthype or Eastside Boxing. Don't bring the sharpness of this U down by mixing ___ with ___ and calling it the wrong syet. Holla!

Carmine Cas says:

I think Cotto should get his *** in shape, hire someone else and drop down to 147. He didn't carry all of his power up to 154 plus he's at a huge height & reach disadvantage. Like Radam said hire someone like Hunter, Atlas etc, get his a*s in shape and give it one more go. He's still 32 he's got some fight left in him. He needs to improve on his foot work. If Marquez beats Pacquiao, Cotto and Manny should do rematch. No catchweight bs, no rehydration limits

SouthPaul says:

Da hell with Atlas... He's too much of a hothead, too much of a know it all. He's an erratic SOB. You need someone in a corner who doesn't over talk. Less is more. Bring in Joe Goosen. I've always enjoyed his smooth operating style. He's also the sharpest dressed trainer in the biz. Add some serious Cali style to Team Cotto both in fighting style and wardrobe.

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Radam

I agree. That's why I used my Albert Einstein analogy when describing MAYweather's inside the ropes boxing savvy.

the Roast says:

I am in favor of a Canelo-Cotto fight and have been since the Mayweather-Cotto-Alvarez-Mosley card. Cotto wont have to look for Alvarez. It is young vs old and Mexico vs Puerto Rico. Huge crossroads matchup. I like the Joe Goosen idea SP. Can't get enough Joe Goosen. Styles make fights we always say. Trout was just a bad matchup for Cotto, thats all.

Buzz Murdock says:

Totally agree with you Mr. Hauser...the mileage on Cotto is pretty obvious...look forward to Bart Barry's column every week...one thang, when Denny Moyer died I don't think the news went past the Oregon border...Both Moyer and his brother Phil died of dementia, spending their last years in a convalescent hospital...there's a documentary called the next round (I believe), which illustrates their disintergration. Moyer is probably in the top five of boxers who have made television appearances. He fought everyone from Sugar Ray Robinson to Emile Griffith...not one word on any boxing site as to his tragic end...Personally, I didn't care for his style, but respected his grit...Possibly a scribe such as yourself, or Mr. Barry can find the thread of a metaphor in Denny's dead-end.

tlig says:

Is it me or does Hauser always see fights as being closer than the judges had it?

ali says:

[QUOTE=tlig;23189]Is it me or does Hauser always see fights as being closer than the judges had it?[/QUOTE]

Lol!! no it ain't just you

Radam G says:

Many of those judges are incompetent. And couldn't judge an ugly contest between the Wicked Witch of the West and Lil Wayne and Favor Fav and Cinderilla's ugly step-sisters. Holla!