

How to Pronounce Pacquiao

Written by Rick Folstad
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You can't spell his name or pronounce it, but you know who Manny Pacquiao is.

If you don't, he's half of the dynamic duo that put on that big show for us back in March. You remember it. Erik "El Terrible" Morales (48-3, 34 KOs) won the fight, but it was pretty close all the way to the end, just like you wanted it to be.

So they may as well try it again, right? You don't have a great first date without asking her out again, and you don't let a barnburner slip by without utilizing the rematch clause.

Pacquiao-Morales II – also known as "The Battle!" – is set for Jan. 21 at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas (HBO pay-per-view). Expect large contingencies from Mexico (Morales) and the Philippines (Pacquiao). These two come from different parts of the world, but they're already legends inside their own borders.

If there's a guy who has something to prove in the rematch, it's Pacquiao (40-3-2, 31 KOs). After all, he lost the first one.

"I don't think we fought that great of a fight that first time out," said Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, on a recent conference call promoting the WBC international super-featherweight title fight. "It was a tough fight and Manny (who is a southpaw) was getting a little anxious, a little left hand hungry in there. We watched the tape and there's some adjustments we can make in this fight and I think we can fight a much better fight than the first time out."

There was also the glove controversy. Pacquiao wore Winning gloves for the first fight and, according to Roach, it was like fighting with pillows strapped to your fists. It was the first time Pacquiao had worn that brand of glove and it was a big distraction for him.

"I'm very happy right now because I get to use Reyes gloves this time," Pacquiao said.

"They (Winning gloves) definitely have an effect on punching power," Roach said. "It will be one less distraction to use the gloves we want this time."

According to Pacquiao's manager, Shelly Finkel, his fighter has a different mindset for this fight.

"From everything we've seen and everything they're telling me, Manny is the most relaxed he's been," Finkel said. "He hasn't got distractions. If he can't win this fight, it's only because Morales is better."

I guess that rules out any excuses.

While Pacquiao is coming off a win for this fight, Morales lost a decision to Zahir Raheem in September, though he was fighting as a lightweight at the time. What all that means is hard to

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say, but Roach said they aren't expecting anything less than the Morales they faced the first time around.

"We expect him to be at his best," Roach said. "His pride's at stake. His whole country is behind him. We'd be fools not to expect him at his very best. We're all business this time. Manny wants this fight badly."

According to Roach, Pacquiao is a natural 126-pounder, but he's moving up to 130 because that's where he gets his second shot at Morales.

"Morales is a little bigger, yes," Roach said. "But I think Manny is a little quicker, and he can use that speed to his advantage."

Asked if he'd be surprised if Pacquiao knocked out Morales, Roach said he wouldn't be surprised at all.

"If he sticks to the game plan and does what he has to do in the fight, I could see him knocking this guy out. But you know, (Morales) is a very game guy and a very tough guy and I don't know if he's ever been knocked out. But there's always a first time."