

Manny, Mo and Pac

Written by Rick Folstad

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It was mentioned the other day that while Manny Pacquiao was busy training to fight Erik Morales, Erik Morales wasn't only busy training to fight Manny Pacquiao. He was also busy training to make weight.

Tough way to make a buck.

Doesn't seem quite fair to Morales. He's got two personal demons to deal with, and one of them packs a pretty good wallop and won't go away with a little sweat.

"Morales is training hard to make weight and training hard to win," Pacquiao said on a conference call promoting Saturday's super-featherweight rubber match with Morales (48-4, 34 KOs) at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas (HBO PPV). "That's a lot for a fighter to do."

But Pacquiao (42-3-2, 33 KOs) can't do much about Morales' growth spurts or dinner habits. And he sure can't let it get into his head that Morales might come into the ring Saturday night a tired, drained fighter who already took a standing eight-count in a close win over his weight problem.

Pacquiao should be ready for just the opposite.

But after two fights with Morales, Pacquiao knows that. He knows what "El Terrible" can bring and bring and bring again. And that's the guy Pacquiao says he's training for, not the one who might have left most of his fight in little puddles back on the gym floor.

"We worked twice as hard than at any other training camp before," Pacquiao said. "We're going to put on a great fight and make the fans happy."

That's a pretty safe promise on behalf of Pacquiao.

Morales always shows up for a fight with a chip on his shoulder, a do-or-die look in his eye and a heart the size of a Buick.

And Pacquiao? Promoter Bob Arum calls him the Energizer Bunny because he "just keeps coming and coming and coming, and it's phenomenal because he never gets tired."

Well, not that you can notice.

They're calling the fight "The Grand Finale," which apparently means there aren't any immediate plans for Morales-Pacquiao IV.

But that's probably a good thing. Doesn't sound like Morales is very fond of continually working

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his way down to super-feather. I'm thinking "lightweight division" has a pretty good ring to it right about now.

On top of everything else, both these guys have entire nations waiting to party hardy on their behalf. For Morales, who was born in Tijuana, it's Mexico. For Pacquiao, it's the Philippines.

Expect some late-night revelers in both countries regardless of who wins.

"Our fight is bigger than the two of us because we carry more into the ring than most other fighters," said Pacquiao, already a legend in his homeland. "We carry the heart and soul of our people and the pride and honor of our nations. The pressure on us is enormous, which is why I will be on the attack the second I hear the bell for round one."

More important, a quick attack might also be a smart way to win a big fight.

"I don't want to give him a little bit of confidence, so I will be testing him early and I will not stop," Pacquiao said. "I trained hard this time."

He did it right. He only trained to fight Morales.