

Is Manny Pacquiao Mr. Pound-For-Pound?

Written by Matthew Aguilar
Monday, 20 November 2006 19:00

Is Manny Pacquiao the best pound-for-pound fighter in boxing?

Maybe.

In the wake of "Pac-Man's" brilliant destruction of Erik Morales last week in Las Vegas, there are those who are more impressed by Pacquiao's knockout of "El Terrible" than Floyd Mayweather's decision over Carlos Baldomir on Nov. 4.

I'm one of them. And, as "Manny Pacquiao" pointed out in response to my last column praising Pac-Man (likely not the real Manny Pacquiao), I'm the guy who said the Filipino was, ahem, "running out of time" back in January.

Yeah, I was wrong. Hmm. How can I make it up to you, Pac-Man? By putting you at the top of my pound-for-pound list, perhaps?

Let's examine.

Mayweather, the man generally recognized as the best fighter in boxing, has beaten a wider array of world-class fighters than Pacquiao. Everyone from Genaro Hernandez to Diego Corrales to Jose Luis Castillo to DeMarcus Corley to Baldomir. Those fighters represent four weight divisions, three of which he has virtually cleaned out. And he has reigned as a champion, and an elite fighter, for nine years.

But Pacquiao's domination of two of the greatest fighters of his generation – Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera – may be more impressive. And the way he did it – by brutal knockout – is much more entertaining than Mayweather's standard boxing clinics.

Take the Mayweather victory over Baldomir.

Please.

"Pretty Boy" Floyd did what he was supposed to do. He outclassed a lesser opponent. He boxed neatly and used his physical advantages – like speed and quickness – to win an easy decision.

Ho-hum.

To say that excitement was lacking at the end of the fight is to say that Butterbean is overweight. Simply, it was next-to-dreadful.

And Mayweather wondered why people were booing. Hmm. If they wanted a waltz, they would have gone to the senior citizens center.

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Floyd's post-fight interview with Larry Merchant had more drama and excitement than the fight. For \$49.95, that sure didn't make me happy. And Mayweather's performance sure wasn't as dominant as could have been. Or should have been.

Baldomir, who is slow as ketchup, actually landed on Mayweather, who appears to be more vulnerable at welterweight. Meanwhile, "Pretty Boring's" punch is almost nonexistent. And he's a tad slower than he ever was at junior welterweight, lightweight or junior lightweight.

Despite a near shutout, Mayweather-Baldomir was more competitive than it should have been. Now, competitive does not necessarily translate to thrilling.

Which it certainly was not.

Baldomir was big and strong. But he sure didn't offer Mayweather anything technically that should have given him problems. He presented Mayweather with a predictable, straight-head, unimaginative, orthodox style. Mayweather should have looked like Sugar Ray Robinson. He should have shined like military shoes.

He didn't. Yawn.

What would Sugar Ray Leonard have done to an opponent so completely outclassed? Remember, it was Mayweather who claimed that he could whip Sugar Ray, had the two fighters competed in the same era.

The Baldomir fight had to make you laugh at that assertion.

And, maybe it's no fault of Mayweather's, but his body of work doesn't compare with Leonard's. There are good fighters on his resume, but no great ones. Leonard took care of Wilfred Benitez, Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns and Marvin Hagler – all lock Hall-of-Famers.

It's arguable whether Mayweather would have stayed in the ring with one or any of that foursome.

And, beyond that, Leonard fights were never dull. Okay, there was one, a 10th round knockout of Larry Bonds in 1981. But that was it. If Sugar Ray was presented with a less-talented opponent, he generally steamrolled them in spectacular fashion.

Pete Ranzany. Ayub Kalule. Bruce Finch. They were all destroyed.

Mayweather opts to put us, and not his opponents, to sleep, whether it's against Carlos Hernandez or Carlos Rios or Baldomir. Sugar Ray brought excitement.

Pretty Boy brings dreams of blue unicorns flying through the air amidst stardust and cute little angels. Then you wake up and hear him proclaiming that, if Oscar De La Hoya wants some, he'll "tax that a--, too."

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What's on SportsCenter?

So what does all of this have to do with Pacquiao?

Well, not only is Pac-Man one of the best fighters in the world – and getting better with every fight – he's also one of the most exciting. He comes to fight, asserts himself in the ring, and swings for the knockout on every punch.

Compare that to Mayweather, who walks to the ring in a Roman gladiator outfit and "Philthy Rich Records" on his waistband, and backpedals for 12 rounds.

If excitement and drama and a mammoth following have anything to do with it, it's Pac-Man in a landslide.

Further, Pacquiao has beaten Morales twice, Barrera once and drew with Juan Manuel Marquez in a fight that most people thought he won.

So, should Pac-Man be at the top?

Probably not yet. We'll have to wait until after May 5, when Mayweather is scheduled to defend his newly-won welterweight title against De La Hoya, who will present Mayweather with some problems. And, hopefully, make an exciting fight with a fighter who doesn't know the meaning of the word.

Mayweather-De La Hoya will also be a fight that will go far in determining Mayweather's place in the pound-for-pound rankings, and in history. Because, for the first time, he is facing an opponent who is not only big and strong, but has the talent and hand speed to compete with him.

Then, if De La Hoya wins, or if Mayweather looks bad, Pacquiao may be boxing's new pound-for-pound king.

Until then, here goes. A pound-for-pound list, as of Nov. 21, 2006:

1. Floyd Mayweather: Still the king of the mountain, but his reign is becoming shaky.
2. Manny Pacquiao: His knockout of Morales Saturday was frightening. Does Barrera stand a chance?
3. Winky Wright: Slips a notch because of Pacquiao's performance against Morales, and his tame final round vs. Jermain Taylor.
4. Jermain Taylor: Getting better with each fight. Could be #1 by this time next year.
5. Bernard Hopkins: No one believes he's really retired. But retirement is better than fighting Oleg Maskaev.

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6. Marco Antonio Barrera: Still a master craftsman, but those boxing skills may be useless against a whirlwind like Pacquiao.

7. Ricky Hatton: Not sure where to rate dormant "Hitman." But, he is obviously a better junior welterweight.

8. Jose Luis Castillo: His reputation has taken some abuse, but he is still one of the best. Showdown with Hatton would be spectacular.

9. Rafael Marquez: The hardest puncher in boxing needs a big fight.

10. Joe Calzaghe: A showdown with either Hopkins, Taylor or Wright would tell us more about this very good fighter.