

Hatton: In My Eyes, This Fight Is Over

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 17 October 2007 19:00

The Hitman has been putting in extra time on the tape machine leading up to his Dec. 8 showdown with Floyd Mayweather, going over Floyd's first fight with Jose Luis Castillo, a hotly disputed win, over and over again.

Hatton, dismissed on the message boards by everybody but his faithful squad of admirers who will invade Las Vegas the week of Dec. 8, blinding one and all with their pasty skin and flashy boasts talking up their man's chances, believes fervently that he's deciphered the way to knock Floyd off his perch.

Phone-in fans of Mark Cuban and Marie Osmond deciphered how to kick PBF to the curb, but that was on the reality show "Dancing With the Stars." Doing it in the ring is a whole 'nother level of hard.

During a conference call to check in with media as to how Hatton's doing as he kicks into a camp that will run 13 weeks total, the just-turned-29-year-old Hitman didn't sound totally committed to the concept of beating Floyd.

There were some 'ifs' and 'I intend tos.'

I thought I'd be hearing a level of certainty in his voice, and frankly, being one of the legions of folks who don't think Hatton has the pop or the footspeed to dump Floyd, that didn't encourage me to consider that the Mancunian could upset PBF.

So I asked Hatton (43-0), point blank, how sure are you that you will beat Floyd?

Hatton explained his hesitance to play up his confidence, and set me straight on how he sees the Dec. 8 gloveup.

"I spent my career being respectful, not counting my chickens," he said. "In my eye, it's already over. I can't stress how confident I am."

So there it is. The man's humble roots are showing. His mama didn't raise him to posture and preen. She raised a boy and a man who prefers to let his actions speak louder than his words.

"In my eyes," he said, after I prodded him, "this fight is over. I think Floyd's going to get the shock of his life."

Promoter Oscar De La Hoya exceeded the call and I was surprised when he said that he's never seen Hatton look so trim in between fights. Yeah? I guess he's REALLY porked up in between bouts more than I know, because I didn't think he looked svelte in NY a month ago.

Hatton wouldn't reveal how he exactly plans to do what no professional has been able to do, beat PBF. He did say he'd be getting angles on Floyd (38-0), and be up in his grill from the

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National Anthem onward.

“My heart will explode before I leave him alone for one second,” he said.

Hatton’s blueprint for the upset is PBF’s “win” over Jose Luis Castillo, which came on April 20, 2002. The judges had Floyd ahead after 12 rounds, 116-111, 115-111, 115-111, but many observers thought JLC’s pressure tactics carried the night in Vegas.

After that, Floyd added some fuel to the fire for haters who don’t care for his brand of boasting. “A lot of times, guys listen to the commentators, and they see what they’re being told,” he said then. “Larry Merchant has always been negative to me. I feel like I’m the black sheep of boxing. I heard the fans booing after the decision. But I’ve built a long record vs. Hispanic fighters and they don’t like that. The fight was easy. I’m not going to let nobody beat on me. I caught a lot of his shots on the shoulders and arms, and everybody thinks, ‘Oooh, he hit him.’ That’s not boxing. My philosophy on boxing is hit and don’t get hit. When you get home and you look at the tape, and hear what they said, you’ll think, ‘This is bull.’ Just because the guy puts on pressure doesn’t mean he wins.

CompuBox statistics said Castillo threw more punches, 506-448, and landed more, 203-157. HBO’s Larry Merchant and Harold Lederman thought Castillo won. The record book says otherwise, but Hatton feels that the Mexican’s strategy and tactics that night are instructive to his plan of attack.

Hatton’s tape-watching is so complete that he’s even popped in one of Marlon Starling’s two wins (in ’81, ’85) over Floyd’s dad, Floyd Mayweather Sr., to gain more insight into the Mayweather family style. The rolling shoulder, Hatton said, shouldn’t prove to be so mysterious to fighters.

“I think I’ve sussed it out,” Hatton said. “But I’m not going to give anything away.”

For those who label his chances slim to none, he said, “there’s going to be apologies coming my way.”

Thing is, you can watch all the tape you want of Floyd, but his speed of hand and foot, when you get in with him, is something else. It’s like he’s on ‘fast forward,’ and you’re in regular ‘play’ mode.

SPEEDBAG Hatton didn’t wail over the fact that only 4,000 tix were allotted to his fanatics. He figures they’ll buy most of the closed-circuit tix, but it must be said that having them in the room, screaming their heads off, would be more useful to him. Then again, he probably gets a cut of the closed-circuit, right? So there you go...

---Hatton thinks he’s the main draw in this bout, not PBF.

--Hatton was impressed with Floyd’s stint dancing. He moved well, the Brit said, and though you wouldn’t catch him doing a reality show, he thinks it’s nice for Floyd to show a softer side.

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---PBF's power level isn't close to Kostya's bombs, which Hatton labeled a "rocket launcher right."