Manny Pacquiao was seven days and four hours late for work on his first day on the job last week. Freddie Roach wasn't concerned. He's got weightier issues to worry about.

Snuggled in his bed suffering from the ravages of jet lag after a long flight from Manila to Los Angeles, Pacquiao had locked his door and couldn't be roused, but when he finally did show up at Roach's Wild Card Gym in Hollywood for his first day of training for next month's lightweight title fight with WBC champion David Diaz he was, as always, ready to work. That didn't surprise Roach either because he feels once Pacquiao gets to the gym he approaches his job as professionally as one could ask.

So while promoter Bob Arum was fretting about Pacquiao being a week late in beginning that process, Roach was at ease last week with everything but the unknown factor in this fight, which is how Pacquiao's body will react to moving up from 130 to 135 for the first time and how the fighter himself will handle the new freedom of an added five pounds.

"Manny was having a lot of trouble making 130 lately,'' Roach said from L.A. "He was starving himself to do it and that made him a little weak. Then he'd overeat after the weigh-in to compensate. He gained 15, 16 pounds after the weigh-in before the last (Juan Manuel) Marquez fight. That kind of extra weight makes you sluggish.

"With each fight he was feeling more and more like he'd been starving himself so he'd put more weight back on after the weigh in and it became more and more of a problem. We need to avoid that this time but all I can do is talk to him about what to do after this weigh-in.

"He doesn't have a great diet. Manny can't eat a meal without white rice. He doesn't feel good if he isn't eating starchy white rice but I'm not so concerned about what he'll weigh at the weigh-in. I'm concerned about what he weighs in the ring that night but I'm not going to regulate what he eats.''

Instead he's going to prepare one of boxing's best pound-for-pound fighters as he always has, knowing that not even his keen eye for fistic matters can be sure what moving up to the lightweight division will mean for a guy who began his career at 106 pounds 13 years ago.

"There are a lot of unanswered questions with that,'' Roach admitted. "I think he can handle it but we won't know until the fight if he can take the power of a 135-pound guy. I believe his punch and speed will be there but we can only guess right now. It could be like (Ricky) Hatton when he moved to welterweight. He didn't have the same power or strength.

"There's not much you can do to test that out in the gym. So it's really hard to say until fight time. But you can make an educated guess.''

Freddie Roach is about as educated a man as there is in boxing. He came up the hard way,

fought the hard way and then spent a long apprenticeship under one of boxing's greatest trainers, Eddie Futch, before finally venturing out on his own. Since then he has worked with a multitude of champions and today has a room full of well-schooled professionals under his direction. First among them is Pacquiao, who some consider to be the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world and everyone considers to be the best junior lightweight in the world, but who knows if he can handle another move up in weight to pursue his fourth world title?

Some have been acting as if this latest transition is a fait accompli.

Manny moves to 135 and becomes lightweight champion. Film at 11. Freddie Roach has been around too long and seen too much to let such thoughts linger in his mind.

"I get so mad when they say Diaz isn't anything,'' Roach said. "He went to the Olympic Games. He won a world title. Those things don't happen by accident.

"He's a much bigger guy physically than Manny. Not taller but naturally bigger. He'll be stronger on the inside. So the key to victory for Manny is his footwork.''

Footwork? You think of many things when the name Manny Pacquiao comes up but it takes a while to get to footwork. With 35 knockouts among his 46 wins (46-3-2, 35 KO), you think of power, relentless aggression and a wide-eyed desire to mix it up. By the time you get to footwork most conversations about Manny Pacquiao are long over.

But Roach believes how his fighter moves against Diaz, and hence how he handles the new weight, will be important parts of any victory formula they come up with against Diaz. Quite probably more important than most commentators on such matters would ever think.

"People don't connect Manny to footwork because he has one-punch knockout power,'' Roach said. "We could stand and bang with Diaz but why do it? In the last Marquez fight there were two rounds where Manny was really on his toes and he was tattooing Marquez. That's when Manny is at his best. Moving in and out. That's really his biggest asset.

"Diaz is a strong guy but he's kind of a plodder. Manny can be elusive against him. He'll exchange at some points but he doesn't have to trade with him all night and I don't want him to.

"Don't get me wrong. I want him to win by knockout. Usually when my guy hits someone they go but we don't know yet what happens when he hits a natural lightweight. I remember when I had Marlon Starling (the former welterweight champion) and he moved up to fight Michael Nunn. He was just too small. So we'll see.''

What Roach saw last week, when Pacquiao first arrived at his gym, was a guy at 142 pounds who had already been running in the Philippines for several weeks to prepare for what he knew would be waiting for him - seven hard weeks of training to pare him down to the 135 pound limit and a new experience against a naturally stronger opponent.

Pacquiao weighed 146 when he got into the ring in March with Marquez in Las Vegas and

Roach would expect something similar to occur against Diaz. What he doesn't want is to see his man weigh 135 one minute and a day later carry over 150 pounds into the ring at the Mandalay Bay Events Center to face Diaz.

"This will definitely be a better fight than the Marquez or (Marco Antonio) Barrera fights because Diaz likes to fight and so does Manny,'' Roach said. "It's a great opportunity for Manny but we don't know yet what he'll feel like at that weight. He could win and we might still decide to go back to 130 (as Hatton slid back to junior welterweight after fighting Luis Collazo and Floyd Mayweather, Jr. at 147). You don't know until you do it.''

One thing Roach won't be doing during this time is preparing Oscar De La Hoya for his rematch with Mayweather in September. Although he trained him for the first fight, which De La Hoya lost by split decision, the six-time world champion decided to go back to Mayweather's father and former mentor, Floyd, Sr., for the rematch instead of sticking with Roach. Publicly De La Hoya had nothing but high praise for Roach before and after the fight yet, in the end, he spoke louder by the decision he made. Roach understands this but he believes he understands why the move was made and remains unoffended by it.

"Indirectly it's a criticism of me,'' Roach said, "but that's okay. He treated me very well. He paid me well. He listened. At one point he told me he'd never fight without me again. He told me if I'd trained him his whole career he'd still be undefeated. That's one thing about Oscar. He knows what to say.''

Roach laughs at that, believing in some ways that kind of thinking is also what was behind the re-hiring of Mayweather, Sr. Before the first fight there was much talk about De La Hoya's concerns about the focus of a father preparing someone to beat up his son and Mayweather himself claimed he didn't want to be in that position but the truth is Mayweather, Sr. priced himself out of the first fight when he demanded $2 million to prepare De La Hoya to deliver such a beating to his boy.

""I think some of it is to sell the rematch,'' Roach said of the training switch. "No one is crying out demanding a rematch but that 24/7 show on HBO can really sell a fight. You need that (dysfunctional) Mayweather family to sell it this time because the fight itself is not that interesting. Just like the first one wasn't.

"But I'll also say this. Oscar definitely thinks Floyd, Sr. knows something (about his son). I don't agree with that. I don't think anyone really trained Floyd, Jr. He's a natural born fighter. I don't think his father can make any adjustments in Oscar that will help him. I don't think Floyd, Sr. can change anything except have him carry that left hand too low. It's not in Oscar's mechanics to fight with his left hand down by his ankle but that's what his trainer had him doing against (Steve) Forbes and you saw what happened.

"If Steve Forbes can drill you with the right hand (De La Hoya ended up with a small fracture around the orbital bone in his right eye after winning a lopsided decision from Forbes) what will Little Floyd do?''

Roach's only regret in handling De La Hoya, he said, is that he didn't make a dramatic move in the corner midway through the fight to get his fighter's attention. It is something he'd done with Pacquiao and a few others over the years but this was a different circumstance and a fighter new to him and so he was not sure how he might react under pressure. So he erred on the side of caution and thought better of a move he now wishes he'd tried on De La Hoya.

"Jab and power punch was our plan,'' Roach said of the Mayweather fight, "but he got away from the jab halfway through the fight. I tried to get him back to it but I wish I'd slapped him in the face to get his attention. I'd done it before. I did it to Manny once and after the fight he slapped me back and said, 'Now we're even!' But I didn't know Oscar well enough to try it.''

And so he didn't and De La Hoya let both their fight plan and the fight slip away. It is something that has happened to him in the past in big fights, a moment of doubt changing his fight approach at the worst of times. Might it happen again? Freddie Roach doesn't know but he knows one thing from what he saw in De La Hoya's win over Stevie Forbes.

"A fractured eye socket against somebody who punches like Forbes (lightly) is probably not a good sign,'' Roach said. "When that happens it's usually not a good sign at all.''

It's also not a sign he has to worry about any more. He's got other signs to be watching the next six weeks, none more than the numbers on the scale when Manny Pacquiao steps on it an hour or two before he squares off with David Diaz.