Written by Ron Borges
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Ron Borges spoke to Freddie Roach last week about Manny Pacquiao, and Oscar De La Hoya. With Manny vs. David Diaz on the near horizon, Borges concentrated mostly on Manny material. But Roach's comments on Oscar, I thought, deserved their own platform, so I broke that section out, and it is presented here, in case you missed it the first time around. ---MJW

Freddie Roach won't be 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.''