

Pacman Thinks Diaz Fight Could Be FOTY

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 18 June 2008 19:00

David Diaz has at least one thing on his side going into his June 28 bout with Manny Pacquiao. Gimme a few paragraphs, and we'll spotlight that area where the Chicagoan could hold an edge over the Philippines' most revered entertainer.

First, three areas where Diaz lags behind Manny, areas that I believe will factor in most heavily at the Mandalay Bay:

---A **speed** edge is not something that Diaz can boast holding over Manny; Manny's hands get to where he wants them to be lickety split, and Diaz' shots take a little longer to travel.

---As for **power**, there are a few good reasons why Bob Arum set on the ex-Olympian as the first foe for Pacquiao as he tries his hands in the 135 pound class, and Diaz' relative lack of power is high on the list.

Diaz has a scant 17 KOs in his 34 wins, and has notched stoppages in just two of his last seven outings. Five pounds can make a world of difference in the fight game, but Pacquiao, with 35 knocks in 51 outings, probably has the power edge entering the ring at Mandalay Bay (Pacquiao has a 69 to 47% KO edge). In his last seven bouts, he has ended the night early four times.

---**Footwork** is not a Diaz forte. He can look like a plodder, while under Roach, Manny's footwork has improved immensely, and it allows him to get in position to select the best angles to work from. You could easily see Diaz flailing away, Pacman taking a half step back or to the side, and then doing serious damage with a counter straight left. The Chicagoan squares up a lot, and throws wide, so he is susceptible to smart Pacquiao counterpunching.

But **desire**, that could be one area where Diaz *may* enjoy an edge going into the most high-profile, high-paying gig of his life: desire. Pacquiao is an Obama/Bono mashup in his native land, popularity-wise, and he gets tugged in a thousand directions when he's in the Philippines.

Before every bout, we go on Manny Watch, and carefully scan the gates at local airports near Freddie Roach's Hollywood, CA. gym, as we note if Manny has scooted out of his homeland and joined Roach for camp early, on-time, or late.

Nobody questions his desire to compete, but let's face it, after 51 pro bouts, and strapping on titles in three classes around his waist, one could forgive him if his attention waned now and again. He's been to the mountain top, soaked in the stellar scenery, and gulped in the rarified air, a few times. He's been there, and done that, and in boxing, that always means that a fighter has done more roadwork and situps and endured more food deprivation than anyone not in boot camp should. So maybe, just maybe, David Diaz' desire to reach that fightgame Everest, and take a gander at that scenery, and smell that rarified air--which actually sort of smells like crisp

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American currency--could surpass Pacquiao's.

Now, if Diaz is going in to June 28 thinking that Pacquiao may not be comfortable at 135 pounds, after fighting at 130 since 2005, I do believe he'll be disappointed. On a conference call Wednesday, which featured Pacquiao, Diaz, and promoter Arum, Pacquiao told callers that he feels "strong" at 135, that both his speed and his power are intact, and he's happy to be able to eat more of that white rice he's been craving during whittle-down time pre-camp and during camp.

"It's gonna be a great fight 'cause our styles are similar," said Pacman, in his ever-improving English. For those on Manny Watch, for the record, Pacquiao said he's been in the States for two months, btw.

Pacquiao said that he expects to be the stronger man when he and Diaz glove up, but acknowledged that it is "not easy" to maintain both speed and power as he goes north five pounds.

"I'm very comfortable at 135 pounds," he declared. "Especially after weighing in for 130 pounds, I felt tired in power. This time I feel comfortable. I can eat more than at 130 pounds. I'm stronger at 135 pounds." Pacquiao told a caller that he walked around at 150 pounds, which means he drops a reasonably reasonable 15 pounds to make weight at 135.

Filipinos love Pacquiao, of course, most of all because he's a winner, but they also adore his humility, even as he's collected massive purses, accolades and belts. That humility was displayed when he was asked if he believes he sits atop pound for pound lists now that Floyd Mayweather has gone on hia....has retired.

"I don't want to compare myself to boxers," he said. "My goal is to give a good fight and get in shape, to show people I'm a good boxer."

Class and humility were in the air when he said that this trash-talk free promotion is the "right way to promote a fight" and that he didn't want to offer a prediction of the outcome June 28, but stated he wants to do his best, and believes he and Diaz will pull off a Fight of the Year contender.

As far as scouting goes, Pacquiao said he watched the first and second round of Diaz/Morales. He doesn't need to watch all that much tape to know "he's going to attack me," the hitter said.

Pacquiao, Diaz and Arum are all feeling like this one is going to be a favorable style matchup for those who like fast and furious trading, and we'll be touting it as Fight of the Year at the end of the night. I think Manny's edges will make the bout too one-sided to leave us with a FOTY candidate, but there will be enough back-and-forth trading to spur fightwriter's and fightwatcher's spouses to urge them to hush up after they let loose a couple "Holy Shittake Mushrooms!" that might wake the baby up. My pred: Pacquiao TKO6.

SPEEDBAG Concerning a theoretical Pacquiao/De La Hoya tussle, promoter Arum weighed

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in. "Rumors of that are not coming from the De La Hoya camp, not from Richard Schaefer. It's a great thing to talk about, but it's not very realistic as far as it happening." But, Arum said, Pacquaio is so willing to beef anytime, anywhere, with anyone, that he'd be willing to fight Wladimir Klitschko.