

Pacman Dumps Oscar

Written by Ron Borges

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Most of the people who spend a goodly portion of their time in Los Angeles would pay any price to win an Oscar. Manny Pacquiao is not one of those people.

On Wednesday Pacquiao did to Oscar De La Hoya what he does to every fighter he faces. He refused to back down to him.

Pacquiao chose to reject potentially the biggest payday of his life rather than accept from De La Hoya the terms of a deal he felt was beneath him. Whether or not that will prove to be fiscally sound may be debatable but it was certainly more than understandable because the basic premise of Pacquiao and his advisors in the Philippines was this – why should he take the same cut as Floyd Mayweather, Jr. when he's more popular than Floyd Mayweather, Jr.?

The larger question no one has yet asked however should be directed at De La Hoya. If the final fight of his career is as important to him as he says it is why is he arguing over Pacquiao's percentage of what has been projected to be a potential \$100 million gross? Pacquiao's promoter, Bob Arum, made clear that a 65-35 split would have satisfied Pacquiao and if that's true, why is De La Hoya hung up on what in essence would amount to \$5 million?

As it is, his promotional company figures to make another killing and so does De La Hoya, so refusing to give ground on what is probably money De La Hoya would only end up paying in taxes any way seems more of a power play in the area De La Hoya has grown to believe is most important – which is the money end of boxing rather than the business end of boxing.

The two sides admit De La Hoya agreed to fight the lightweight champion at 147 pounds, a weight he hasn't made in seven years, and use eight-ounce gloves even though De La Hoya wanted 10 ounce ones. If winning the last fight of your career is central to what you're about one would think the wealthiest man in boxing would be giving in on the money, as Sugar Ray Leonard did to lure Marvelous Marvin Hagler into the boxing ring, while holding firm on the issues that actually help decide who wins a fight.

Hagler was the only Leonard opponent ever to make more than he did in a match but the then middleweight champion gave in on the size of the ring and the fight distance, agreeing to 12 rounds when 15 were still in vogue.

Even those who believe Hagler won that night concede he traded off the most important things for a few more dollars. Now, it seems, De La Hoya is willing to do the same because, it would seem, he now believes the size of his purse is more important than the number of victories after his name.

De La Hoya had hoped to make his farewell fight the biggest of his career. He offered 140-pound champion Ricky Hatton the opportunity but he wisely turned it down, realizing De La Hoya's superior size and strength would be too difficult to overcome.

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Pacquiao, though smaller than Hatton, was willing to take the risk however because he believes De La Hoya will struggle to make 147 after failing to make 150 by a pound in May when he fought Steve Forbes. He and trainer Freddie Roach both feel Pacquiao has the power and the style to not only beat De La Hoya but to stop him in part because they do not believe he is the same fighter he once was.

But what Pacquiao has thus far refused to do is under price himself for the opportunity to do it and that seems to have baffled De La Hoya's chief negotiator and CEO of Golden Boy Promotions, Richard Schaefer.

Schaefer argued that Pacquiao's people were caught up in percentages rather than in the fact Pacquiao figured to earn between \$10 million and \$15 million when his previous high was only \$5 million. Perhaps so but couldn't the converse of that also be argued? Is not De La Hoya at least equally caught up in percentages after first insisting on a deal that would have split the money 70-30 only up to a certain gross, after which it would have been 80-20 in De La Hoya's favor?

De La Hoya is the highest earning fighter in history, a boxing and business phenomenon who justly deserves all he's made of himself. But the fact is Pacquiao is nearly as popular at this point in his career and is also the pound-for-pound champion Mayweather was when he out pointed De La Hoya because the six-time world champion waned in the final rounds of the fight.

No one in their right mind would argue Mayweather produced the kind of pay-per-view numbers Pacquiao has without the presence of De La Hoya in the ring with him and no one could argue he took a greater risk because while Mayweather began his career as a natural 130 pounder, Pacquiao began as a natural 106 pounder. So De La Hoya is asking a fighter arguably more popular at the box office than Mayweather and also a smaller man to take the same purse split as Mayweather under the apparent theory that, as Schaefer put it, he would need to fight three or four times to earn the same money.

So what? He's a fighter after all, not an accountant. He fights for a living so the prospect of three or four more fights is hardly daunting to Pacquiao. Neither is the idea of fighting a guy who has been regularly campaigning at either 154 pounds or at 160 for the past seven years.

What was daunting however was to feel you're pay is being decided by a multi-millionaire, part-time fighter who stands nearly a half foot taller, naturally outweighs you by 25 pounds and feels you're not worth a nickel more than Floyd Mayweather, Jr. even though most boxing businessmen would argue Pacquiao is a bigger draw.

If De La Hoya really wants the fight money shouldn't be what prevents it because he has plenty of that. What he doesn't have much of are victories against the biggest names he's faced. As of this morning Oscar De La Hoya has made more money than anyone in the history of boxing. He's also lost to Felix Trinidad, Shane Mosley twice, Bernard Hopkins and Floyd Mayweather, Jr. He is Thomas Hearns with a bigger bank account.

De La Hoya doesn't need an extra \$5 million to end his career. He needs a big win over a big

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name opponent. If he wants the chance at it he'll have to do what Ray Leonard did with Marvin Hagler. He'll have to pay for it.