

Pacquiao Oscar's Only Option

Written by Ron Borges
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According to Richard Schaefer, CEO of Golden Boy Promotions, "Every fighter in the world wants to fight Oscar."

Oscar is, of course, his boss, Oscar De La Hoya, a man desperately seeking a final opponent with whom he can make one last big payday and retire with honor. But every fighter in the world, it seems, comes with some subtle but serious limitations.

Every fighter in the world does not include Manny Pacquiao, who recently rejected a 70-30 purse split to face-off with De La Hoya on Dec. 6 because he felt he was being offered what he termed on a website as "what only an up-and-coming fighter rightly deserves."

He went on to say he deserved a "fair share of the pie," dismissing the roughly \$10 million or so he'd be guaranteed as sliver rather than a slice.

Every fighter in the world does not include Ricky Hatton, who turned down De La Hoya's entreaties even before he got to offer what would surely have been a similar sliver.

Every fighter in the world definitely does not include Floyd Mayweather, Jr., who retired rather than grant De La Hoya a rematch in September after out-pointing him in the highest grossing fight in boxing history.

So it seems "every fighter in the world" is a loosely worded assessment about who actually is willing to be De La Hoya's final opponent. Certainly every fighter in the world without the kind of leverage of a Pacquiao, Mayweather or a Hatton wants to fight De La Hoya. Unfortunately, none of them provide what De La Hoya wants – which is glitz, glamour and a gladiatorial edge to them.

Certainly Schaefer would be correct in saying most fighters in the world want to face De La Hoya, including former Contender series champion Sergio Mora, whose people are all but on their knees begging for the chance if Mora defeats Vernon Forrest a second time in a Sept. 13 rematch.

But the fact of the matter is Oscar De La Hoya doesn't want to fight every fighter in the world. He wants to fight only one of less than a handful of guys who would give meaning to the final match of his career. Frankly, Sergio Mora is not such a guy.

Mora is a nice fellow and a decent fighter but he is not the kind of name that draws attention. Would De La Hoya and he draw fans? De La Hoya and Sergio Iglesias would draw fans. De La Hoya and Sergio Garcia would draw fans. De La Hoya and Sergio Bustamante would even draw fans.

The point is De La Hoya and a scarecrow would draw fans but that is not really how he wants

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to go out. De La Hoya wants to go out with an epic victory. He wants a rematch with Mayweather, who he believes he would have beaten in their first fight if he'd been a bit bolder and a bit steadier with his jab, or a fight with the reigning pound-for-pound champion, Pacquiao, even though De La Hoya would have to get down to 147 pounds for the first time since he fought Arturo Gatti in 2001.

The fact that De La Hoya has already agreed to fight him at 147 and to use eight ounce gloves instead of 10 ounce gloves speaks to the point. This is an aging legend (fistically speaking) who wants one last shining moment, a fact he willingly admitted to Monday.

"I want a big fight," De La Hoya told a crowd of reporters at his annual celebrity golf tournament in southern California. "I want to go out with a big bang. I want to make it an event.

"I want to make it a worldwide event because I want to show the boxing world and I want to show everybody around the world that boxing is alive and well."

What he also wants to show is that he remains more than just the biggest name in boxing. He wants to show he can win a big fight in boxing, something frankly that he has not yet really done.

De La Hoya has won many fights, six world titles and Olympic gold medal. He has earned more money than any boxer in history. He is a Hall of Fame fighter simply waiting for the ballots to come in. Yet the sad fact is he's 0-5 when his biggest moments came.

The memory of losing to Felix Trinidad, Shane Mosley twice, Bernard Hopkins and Mayweather cannot be erased by beating up Sergio Mora. You don't face a guy fighting on the undercard of Joel Casamayor vs. Juan Manuel Marquez on Sept. 13 and claim it's the equivalent of facing Mayweather. You don't beat a guy who nearly lost to Peter Manfredo and try to argue it's like beating Manny Pacquiao. Not even Oscar De La Hoya can pull that off.

In all honesty the only fighters who fit the role De La Hoya is trying to have filled are Mayweather, Pacquiao and possibly welterweight champion Antonio Margarito but De La Hoya has already made clear he wants no part of Margarito, which is a wise decision. De La Hoya claims it's for business reasons. But the 6-1 Margarito is coming off a thrashing of previously undefeated Miguel Cotto and would be a nightmare for De La Hoya because he is bigger, at least as strong if not stronger, and a relentless, pressure fighter with an iron chin and a disposition not predisposed to make life easy for boxing's Golden Boy.

At nearly 37, De La Hoya is not looking to give up his advantages, which at this juncture are height and power, to someone like Margarito, whose five losses and general lack of a wide public following beyond boxing's gadflies make him less than ideal for De La Hoya's purposes any way.

Pacquiao is the pound-for-pound best fighter in the world and Mayweather was his undefeated predecessor before he chose to retire. Either fit the job description De La Hoya has put out. Sergio Mora, any other Sergio you can come up with and nearly every fighter in the world do

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not. Margarito fits it less comfortably than even Mora because he is less well known to the general public and is far more dangerous.

With Mayweather retired and Hatton unavailable because of his Nov. 22 fight vs. Paulie Malignaggi, the fact of the matter is that rather than having every fighter in the world to pick from De La Hoya has only one – Manny Pacquiao.

If he can convince him to take the 70-30 split he's already rejected once before or, more likely, can come up with a way to sweeten the pot without it publicly looking like he did so, De La Hoya will have the opponent he not only wants but the one he needs for one grand finale.

If he doesn't, as Richard Schaefer said, he'll have his choice of every other fighter in the world. Only problem there is most people couldn't care less whom that might be.