

Pacquiao Wins Round One Against Hatton

Written by Ron Borges

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Manny Pacquiao finally locked in the biggest payday of his career Friday – a guaranteed \$12 million to face off with Ricky Hatton May 2 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena – but his trainer still thinks he's underpaid.

Pacquiao took Hatton and his promoters, Oscar De La Hoya and Richard Schaefer, to the brink and then made them blink. He did the same thing a few months back when he forced De La Hoya to throw him an extra three per cent (62-38 rather than 65-35 split of their Dec. 8 fight) and then made him blink again throughout a one-sided eight round beating that ended only when De La Hoya quit on his stool.

That dominating victory over boxing's Golden Boy, coupled with the fact Pacquiao believed he'd made him back down in their negotiations as well, led him to some brinksmanship with Hatton that had Schaefer growling, his own promoter, Bob Arum, shaking his head and trainer Freddie Roach in the dark until all sides relented on their insistence that the purse be split 50-50 and agreed to a 52-48 breakdown that guarantees Pacquiao \$12 million plus a sweetener from Arum that he claims "won't cost me anything" but others whisper is worth \$1.5 million extra.

What would have cost them all dearly was if Pacquiao didn't get the A side of the purse and walked away. Pacquiao's thinking on this was so simple it's absurd the numbers crunchers couldn't see it until the fight was threatened. In his mind he knocked out De La Hoya and his biggest fight on one of the biggest pay-per-view cards in history. Hatton got knocked out by Floyd Mayweather, Jr. in his biggest fight. How does that result in a 50-50 purse split?

"Every time somebody beats Oscar they want Oscar money," Roach said Friday from California, where he will work the corner of MMA heavyweight Andrei Arlovski at Saturday night's Affliction pay-per-view show in Anaheim. "Hatton brings a lot to the table because he did well on pay-per-view with Mayweather. But he didn't do as well with Paulie Malignaggi in his last fight. Maybe that's the economy. Maybe it's because it was Paulie and not Floyd. You have to ask yourself how much of the sales were driven by Mayweather.

"After you get knocked out people don't look at you the same way, either. Whatever it was, Manny wanted to be the bigger guy and he deserved to be the bigger guy. Manny wanted 60-40. I didn't want to see him blow the fight over it but I felt he deserved it. In the end he got 52-48. Why not? Manny beat De La Hoya easily. Hatton got knocked out by Mayweather. Richard Schaefer is a pretty good negotiator but Manny was more than fair."

Schaefer loudly criticized Pacquiao after claiming he had a verbal agreement with Arum and Hatton for a 50-50 split of the millions anticipated. Only problem was he didn't have it with the star of the show and he didn't get it until Pacquiao did what he's done to so many of his opponents in the ring. He made them blink.

Now the deal appears to be ironed out - and wisely so by all sides from a financial and fistic

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standpoint - Roach is anxious to get Pacquiao into a training camp set to begin March 1 at his Wild Card Gym in Hollywood, Ca. That's two solid months of training for an opponent who, frankly, Roach believes is a perfect foil for boxing's reigning pound-for-pound champion.

"I'm glad it happened," Roach said. "Hatton is made for Manny. He's a tough guy who comes forward. He's a game guy looking to mug you. That's the perfect style for Manny.

"Manny's speed and his ability to go side-to-side and in and out makes Hatton perfect for him because he's right there in front of you, coming forward, all the time. A guy like Mayweather is much more difficult because he's always moving and he's defensive. You've got to chase him to make it a fight.

"You don't have to chase Hatton. You don't have to look for Ricky. You know where he's going to be. He's right there in front of you, which is what Manny likes. He likes a guy who wants to try and make it a fight."

Roach, who has spent his entire life in the fight game, never believed the bout was off despite screaming headlines to that effect two days ago when Pacquiao rejected the 50-50 split Arum had negotiated for him. Schaefer stamped his feet and the Hattons supposedly directed him to go find another big fight for the junior welterweight champion but the fact is there was no other big fight and they all knew it.

So did Manny Pacquiao.

The Juan Manuel Marquez-Juan Diaz winner, especially if it turned out to be Marquez, would have been a fairly big payday for Pacquiao but for Hatton it would have meant little and if it was Diaz nothing. As for Mayweather, both sides understand that is the second fight in this two-fight arrangement because if you fight Mayweather and lose, as Hatton already has in one-sided fashion, then there's no Pacquiao fight to sell the public.

"They could both go to Mayweather but they all knew that's the second fight, not the first fight," Roach said with a laugh. "The thing is Manny doesn't really care about fighting Mayweather. After Hatton he wants to fight (welterweight champion Antonio) Margarito.

"He told Arum that already. He told Arum, 'I can outbox him all night long.' Margarito is relentless and he's got that iron chin but I would never underestimate Manny."

That is now a wise approach, not only for his opponents, but also for the negotiators representing those opponents because ever since he got that extra three per cent from De La Hoya and then gave him a night-long beating, Manny Pacquiao seemed to grasp just who he is and where he fits in the marketplace.

According to a press release sent out by Winchell Campos, a Pacquiao associate, Pacquiao said, "They were quoted as saying that if I do not sign their contract they already have offers for them to fight in the British Isles with 80,000 people watching. Now it's obvious that they were just bluffing...I want to fight Ricky Hatton if the terms are right and fair. Modesty aside, I did not

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become the best pound-for-pound fighter by fighting patsies on my way to the top...I proved I can fight at any weight level...What Schaefer failed to consider is the fact I am not fighting De La Hoya in this match.”

The latter was a reference to Schaefer claiming after it appeared the fight had fallen through that just because you beat Oscar De La Hoya it doesn't make you Oscar De La Hoya. That was never Manny Pacquiao's contention. His contention was just because you get knocked out by Floyd Mayweather, Jr. it doesn't make you Manny Pacquiao.

On that point, in the end, he prevailed. Soon he and Hatton will be together on a press tour to London and Manchester, England, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. On every stop Pacquiao will know who blinked when the money was on the line. It wasn't him.

Come May 2, he and Freddie Roach believe the same thing will happen again. He'll make the other guy blink...all night long.