

WHEN TRAINERS COLLIDE: Roach Wins This Round Over Mayweather

Written by Michael Woods
Tuesday, 21 April 2009 19:00

Freddie Roach and Floyd Mayweather Sr., two men who've been delivering the spiciest trash talk going into the May 2 Manny Pacquiao/Ricky Hatton clash, didn't disappoint on a Wednesday conference call to hype the bout.

The two trainers talked up their boxers' chances in Vegas, and managed to throw some vicious haymakers in the call, refereed by publicist Kelly Swanson. TSS thinks Roach got the decision, by a wide margin, as he busted on Mayweather for being in jail while his brother Roger turned Floyd Jr. into a pound for pound pugilist, and mocked the former pro boxer for blaming a bullet wound to his leg for a disappointing career. Senior got in his hits, without any of his trademark poetry, as he labeled Roach the biggest punching bag among pro boxers laboring in the 1970s and 1980s. By the end of the call, as the insults turned more vicious, and Mayweather said he wanted to track down Roach, Golden Boy exec Richard Schaefer curtailed the call, so the trainers could save some vitriol.

The 56-year-old Mayweather, who fought as a pro from 1974-1990 and ended with a 29-6-1 mark, said that he's just having fun when he labels Roach a "joke" and degrades his skills as a trainer. But, he said, "Who has he really worked with? He had a lot of big fighters, but he's done nothing with them. What fighters has he ever made? This guy ain't made nobody! But, I'm having fun with this."

The 49-year-old Roach fought as a pro from 1978-1986, and left the ring with a 39-13 mark. He said he doesn't pay much attention to Senior's trash talk. He pointed out that he worked with former light heavyweight and cruiserweight champion Virgil Hill since the hitter turned pro, and then turned the screws on Sr., saying, "Roger made Floyd Junior as a fighter."

Among other highlights:

Mayweather said that he picked up a tidbit from watching HBO's 24/7, that Roach was hesitant to let sparring partners hit Pacquiao to the body.

Roach said he takes issue with a common conception, that Hatton will be the stronger man comes fight night. "I disagree with that," he said. "Manny has kayoed four sparring partners out of seven. He's looking good at this weight. Hatton will be heavier at fight time but that doesn't make him stronger. I have the stronger fighter, I guarantee that."

When asked if Hatton would win the bout because Senior was his trainer, Floyd flurried, and then backed off. "I would say so," he said, then paused and added, "He probably could win without me. He definitely has a much better chance with me than without me." Freddie took the smart route from the start, saying that Manny was a great fighter when he came to the Wild Card, eight years ago, and that is up to Manny to win the fight. "He will win the fight himself, he doesn't need me," Roach said.

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Roach scored on this judge's card when he accused Senior of being scared to let 24/7 viewers watch Hatton in sparring. Senior said that the show made a judgment on what to show, and denied he had requested no footage of sparring be shown. "Don't blame me on what (HBO) does," he said. He then said Pacquiao's sparring partners were acting when they crumpled to the canvas after taking a Manny body shot. "There ain't gonna be acting on May second," Mayweather said.

Freddie quipped a few times that a translator was needed to understand Floyd; at times, this joking does take on a personal tone that transcends the expected banter that accompanies big fights.

Floyd pushed Freddie's buttons when he said he has a poster which shows Roach as an undercard attraction on a card that Mayweather was in the main event. "I was definitely a better fighter than Freddie," he said.

"He got shot and it ruined his career," Freddie cracked sarcastically. "I fought on TV a lot more than he did."

Freddie also played the relative card. "You're a bum. Your brother was great."

"Roach, he was OK," Senior allowed.

"You're not OK, you're a bum," Freddie said.

Roach then invited Mayweather to present the 2008 Boxing Writers Association Trainer of the Year Award to him at the June 12 BWAA dinner in New York. "It's the closest you'll ever get to it," said Roach, who was awarded the honor in 2003 and 2006. "We'll see about that," Senior replied. "I won it three times. You never won it. Never," Freddie said.

What would come after a win was then touched on. Senior said his son Junior is in training, and said that Roach doesn't want to see a Floyd Mayweather/Manny Pacquiao fight, which in fact Roach has said in the past. "He knows what'd happen," Senior said. Roach said that he and his team are concentrating on Hatton, and Hatton only, at this time. (I do agree that Roach shouldn't be keen on seeing Pacquiao try his hand at Mayweather. Feel free to disagree, Manny Nation!)

As for any tips on what sort of strategies we might see May 2, Mayweather did say that he thinks Manny isn't at his best backing up: "Ricky will definitely back him up. He can't fight backing up, he's no Muhammad Ali." And even if Hatton reverts to "old Ricky" form, he'll still be able to get the nod in Vegas, Mayweather said. Roach said Hatton will taste a left hand, and will hit the deck from the force.

Roach busted on Floyd's middle name, Joy ("Is that a girl's name?"), and the men debated who had the better record. (Freddie had more wins, but Floyd had a better winning percentage --81% to 74%-- and neither man won in their minor title shots.)

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"I know you got shot, poor Floyd," Roach mocked.

Mayweather said that his bro Roger got the better of Freddie in sparring, and Roach smashed that lob back in his face. "I boxed Roger once and you weren't there. I think you were in jail...Selling drugs or something."

"I'm in your head," Mayweather taunted.

"I'm not fighting you, Manny is fighting Ricky," countered Roach.

"I want you Freddie," Mayweather said. "Come get me, you know where I am," Roach replied.

Schaefer then broke up the beef.

All in all, I love me some solid trash talk, and Manny isn't the one to splash around in that swamp, so hats off to Mayweather and Roach for letting the cracks fly. Will it matter come fight time? Not one single solitary stitch. But it might juice the gate and the PPV take a bit, and that is smart business.