

NO ONE Will Be Rooting Harder For Manny Over Hatton Than Floyd

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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With the boxing world counting down the days until the much awaited IBO/Ring magazine junior welterweight title clash between Manny Pacquiao 48-3-2 (36) and Ricky Hatton 45-1 (32) takes place, there is certainly no guessing required to figure out who is the one person most interested in observing the fight on May 2, 2009.

If you haven't figured that out yet, here are a couple of hints.

That person is a recently retired fighter who was undefeated and considered the best pound for pound fighter in boxing when he hung up his gloves. He's always clamored for more attention than he received, and to this writer he wasn't quite as great as he and some fans perceived him to be. If you haven't figured out yet who is currently the biggest Manny Pacquiao fan in the world, I have one last batch of clues -- Arturo Gatti, Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton. There, that should do it!

The names Gatti, De La Hoya and Hatton should be a dead give away since it correlates into his rooting interest for Pacquiao. Yes, I'm talking about Floyd Mayweather Jr (39-0, with 25 KOs). Remember him? Because if you'd forgotten about him you're probably not alone. Mayweather was last in the ring seen stopping Ricky Hatton in the 10th round of their WBC welterweight title bout back in December of 2007. At the conclusion of that fight most agreed that Mayweather was boxing's best and most complete fighter, then he retired. Since his retirement Manny Pacquiao now holds that distinction. Only Manny has something that Floyd never had, and it's paramount as to why Mayweather not only wants, but needs Pacquiao to beat Hatton on May 2, 2009. See, Pacquiao is a huge draw. Every time Manny fights there's almost global interest, regardless of who the opponent is. That's something Mayweather never had, despite the gifted fighter he was/is.

Like Roy Jones before him, some view Floyd Mayweather as a guy who didn't take risk to prove beyond a doubt their greatness. But in Roy's defense, he never looked at the fighters in the divisions beneath him for a challenge. Could you imagine the outrage there would've been had Roy after beating James Toney at 168 started calling out Felix Trinidad who was undefeated and recently captured a piece of the welterweight title?

Mayweather has managed himself superbly. His skill set borders on greatness, but I'm not comfortable calling him an all-time great, at least not in the vein of Roberto Duran, Alexis Arguello, Sugar Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns or even Roy Jones. Think about this, there was a time in mid 2007 where the top ranked welterweights behind Mayweather, the supposed best pound-for-pound fighter in boxing, were Antonio Margarito, Paul Williams, Miguel Cotto, Shane Mosley, Kermit Cintron, and Andre Berto, yet he clamored and lobbied to fight Ricky Hatton, an undefeated junior welterweight. Which of course was the perfect fight for Mayweather. Hatton was made for him from a style vantage point, he wasn't a legitimate welterweight and most importantly he had a huge following. This translated into Floyd Mayweather earning one of his biggest purses without taking too much risk, which is how it works in a perfect boxing world.

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Regardless of how anyone views Mayweather the fighter, whether you think he's great or overrated, one thing that can't be refuted is Floyd has never been a marquee name fighter by himself. He's always needed an opponent with box office appeal to carry the sales and promotion. Floyd is an outstanding fighter fundamentally, but he never really took many chances and his resume above 135 is iffy. On top of that, he doesn't have a personality that makes him easy to love or hate. He's boring as a nice guy and comes off like a punk as a bad guy. Neither version of him is appealing to boxing fans, let alone quasi fans.

Mayweather's first pay per view fight was against Arturo Gatti at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City during the summer of 2005. Gatti, had a huge East Coast following at the time. All of his fights were sellouts in Atlantic City, not to mention Arturo always came to fight and he couldn't deliver a dull fight if he was paid a bonus to do so. On top of all that Mayweather was a level above Gatti as a fighter, especially at that time, and those involved in the promotion were certain that not only would Floyd win, but Gatti wouldn't get blown out in the first round and would provide Floyd more than a few rounds for him to exhibit his full arsenal of jabs, hooks, crosses and uppercuts, and he did.

Mayweather's biggest fight financially occurred 23 months after his fight with Arturo Gatti, when he met part time promoter and fighter, the Golden Boy, Oscar De La Hoya. Another perfect fight for Floyd from every conceivable angle. De La Hoya agreed to fight Floyd at a catch-weight, was clearly on the decline as a fighter and guaranteed Mayweather the biggest purse of his career, which turned out to be 20 plus million dollars. After winning a split decision over Oscar De La Hoya, Mayweather lured undefeated British IBO Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton to Las Vegas to challenge for his WBC welterweight title. Needless to say Hatton brought half of the UK with him to watch the fight. Once again, Mayweather is paid handsomely without taking much risk.

Ironically, it is Ricky Hatton who controls Floyd's fate again economically. And just as it was when they fought, Mayweather is in the opposing corner. Outside of Manny Pacquiao and his immediate family, nobody is rooting harder for him to beat Hatton than is Floyd Mayweather Jr. Sure, Floyd has been retired for a year plus, but he's stayed in shape and has always had his eye open to the biggest money fight out there, with the least risk involved of course. You don't really think Mayweather would entertain coming back to clean out the welterweight division, in the process turning back the almost 38 year old Shane Mosley or the once defeated Miguel Cotto?

No, Mayweather is hoping Pacquiao looks great and stops Hatton, and solidifies his perch as the best pound for pound fighter in boxing. Talk about a perfect comeback fight for Mayweather, it just doesn't get any better. Pacquiao's following will explode in leaps and bounds if he gets by Ricky Hatton on May 2nd. On top of that Mayweather is the rested and bigger man. What a way for Floyd to announce how great he is after retiring undefeated having beaten an opponent who weighed in at 106 pounds for his pro debut.

You better believe Floyd Mayweather Jr. is the biggest Manny Pacquiao fan in the world who's not related to Manny. And you better believe we'll see Mayweather vs. Pacquiao if Manny does in fact beat Ricky Hatton in his next fight. In fact I'll go one further, if Hatton upsets Pacquiao,

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we'll see Mayweather-Hatton II.