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There's nothing like listening to a top-notch boxing trainer as he's preparing his fighter for a big world title fight. Add to that the trainers were both formerly ranked pros who shared the ring with fighters the ilk of Sugar Ray Leonard and Hector Camacho, and it's even more enlightening and entertaining.

Last week, during a conference call, Ricky Hatton's trainer, Floyd Mayweather Sr. and Manny Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, took questions from the boxing press. During the hour-plus question and answer session, Mayweather Sr. did his best Muhammad Ali imitation as he spouted off rhymes deriding both Roach and Pacquiao. Roach, to his credit, did a pretty good Joe Frazier and kept his cool, and more or less laughed at and along with Mayweather, while getting in his own zingers here and there. The one thing that both trainers projected was how absolute they are in their belief that it will be their fighter who comes out on top on May 2nd.

While listening to Mayweather and Roach take questions from the writers, I had to remind myself that neither of them trained Sugar Ray Robinson. That honor and privilege went to George Gainford, who I'll touch on briefly in a moment. The point here is, after listening to Roach and Mayweather discuss their fighters, you'd think that Manny Paquiao and Ricky Hatton were among the top five boxers and top five punchers in the history of their respective divisions. Then again, that's part of the trainers' job and they were both selling the fight.

At one point Mayweather said that after first holding the pads for Hatton, he realized Ricky didn't know anything, but added Hatton could beat Pacquiao even without him in his corner. He said together they've been working on Hatton becoming a more complete fighter and boxer. He added that Ricky has improved his defense and will surprise Pacquiao during the fight with his defense and head movement.

No doubt that sounds good, but most of the time when a fighter gets nailed pretty good in the heat of battle, more often than not they revert back to what they're most comfortable doing. Which led me to ask Floyd Sr. "if he had any fear of Ricky reverting back to his former self once he gets nailed flush on the way in by one of Pacquiao's Sunday left hands?" To that Mayweather said in so many words that even if Ricky reverted back to his brawling style, it wouldn't matter because as far as he's concerned, Hatton can beat Pacquiao via trading with him or by out-boxing him. Mayweather Sr. believes Hatton is naturally bigger and stronger on top of being a better boxer and puncher than Pacquiao. Of course if that is indeed true, Manny's in trouble.

Listening to Mayweather was not unique because Roach answered a similar question almost the same as Mayweather. During the call Freddie indicated how comfortable and strong Manny will be fighting at 140, and that it was difficult for him to make 135. Roach went on to say that Manny walks the streets at around 155. And he even went as far as to say that Pacquiao will not be giving up any strength to Hatton, and that it is his fighter who's the stronger guy; he illustrated that by saying Pacquiao has knocked out four of his seven sparring partners during

training camp. And above all else, Freddie said Manny is the hardest training fighter he has ever been around, going as far as to compare his training regimen to fighters from the old-school era. Roach finished by saying that Manny reminds him of Henry Armstrong.

When I asked Roach about a possible Plan B if Manny catches Hatton on the way in with his best left cross, and Ricky doesn't even change his expression, he said it won't change anything. He said Manny will probably knock Hatton flat with the first good left cross he lands. When I pressed him, suggesting that Hatton will be hard for Pacquiao to out-box if he can't hurt him, Freddie didn't have much concern about that. He gave the impression that Pacquiao will have an answer for anything Hatton tries, via using his jab and boxing, or forcing the fight looking to overwhelm Pacquiao.

In truth, trainers are overrated. In most cases it's 90% the fighter and 10% the trainer, and 10% may even be a stretch. Angelo Dundee is no doubt a certified Hall of Fame trainer, but in truth Muhammad Ali didn't listen to Angelo or Archie Moore, who was his first trainer. When it came to ring strategy and fighting, Ali didn't listen to anything anyone tried to tell him. Emanuel Steward was a great asset to Lennox Lewis when it came to teaching him how to use his size and fight like a big guy. On the other hand did he “become inept” when he trained Jermain Taylor, who actually had one of his worst showings while Steward was in his corner?

How much did boxing's current best trainer, in my opinion, Nacho Beristain, help Oscar De La Hoya in his last fight? It wasn't Nacho's fault Oscar was of declining skill and he couldn't cope with Pacquiao's quick hands and reflexes. George Gainford only trained one great fighter, Sugar Ray Robinson. Is it a coincidence that Gainford never trained another fighter who could be considered outstanding, let alone great? In fact Gainford was once asked while holding court at a local tavern, "How come none of your other fighters fight as great as Robinson?" To which he had no response. Kevin Rooney is another example. Other than Mike Tyson, who was taught how to fight by Cus D'Amato, who were the other greats he developed and worked with?

No doubt, Floyd Mayweather Sr. and Freddie Roach are two of the best boxing trainers around today. If I owned a fighter’s contract, I'd be comfortable with him under the tutelage of either one of them. However, as redundant as the saying "styles make fights" is, it'll be Pacquiao and Hatton who ultimately determine who wins their fight, not the guys working the corner.

In regards to the trainers, if Hatton loses, will Floyd Mayweather Sr. take the blame? Of course not, just like Freddie Roach won't if Pacquiao loses. If Pacquiao tags Hatton with a big left hand, and Ricky reverts to brawling and slugging, something his trainer would advise against, there's nothing Floyd Mayweather Sr. can do about it. On the other hand, if Hatton walks through Pacquiao's best and is too strong for him to move around and box, Freddie Roach is helpless.

Trainers can do some useful things, and some harmful things if they don't know what they're doing, but they walk back down the steps when the bell rings.