

## Why Pacquiao/Hatton Is Unique

Written by Frank Lotierzo  
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I don't make it a habit to endorse or suggest that fans reach in their pocket and buy a particular fight. In fact, if I'm not attending it, it better have more than just two well known names on the marquee before I reach in my pocket or write a check out for it. In this observer's opinion, Pacquiao-Hatton is a fight for boxing purists.

Tonight's junior welterweight IBO title bout between Manny Pacquiao 48-3-2 (36) who many believe is boxing's best pound for pound fighter, and Ricky Hatton 45-1 (32) whose only defeat came at the hands of Floyd Mayweather Jr., who was the best pound for pound fighter in the sport until he retired, has all the ingredients you could ask for in a big fight. Both guys are 30 years old and haven't started to show signs of erosion, although maybe after this one, they'll start. Based on the history of these two guys, it's not a reach thinking they'll return to the Philippines and the UK less than the fighters who arrived in Las Vegas last month.

Not only are there 12 million reasons for both fighters to shine, but it's a career defining fight for the winner. A win by Pacquiao would give him four titles in four different weight divisions. It's almost unheard of for a fighter, who turned pro 14 years ago weighing 106 pounds, to go through the best fighters campaigning at 140. In Hatton's case, beating Pacquiao would give him a win over a guy who some have referred to as a physical freak. Along with that, he can boast that he beat the best fighter in boxing, something he came up short trying to do the last time he shared the ring with boxing's perceived pound for pound best in December of 2007.

Another factor that makes Pacquiao-Hatton so intriguing is, it's one of the rare recent big fights where it's really tough to pick a clear cut winner, something that couldn't be said about Hopkins-Pavlik, Jones-Calzaghe or De La Hoya-Pacquiao. Yes, I included De La Hoya-Pacquiao because only avid Pacquiao fans were absolutely certain that Manny would win. Sure, Pacquiao is the better fighter on paper and is the betting favorite, but a Hatton win isn't close to being a monumental upset.

Another thing that this fight offers is, it's a "real fight." Can there be one boxing fan who's aware of who these two guys are that questions that? No, and if they do, they haven't clue-one as to what they're watching. The reality is, not only will Pacquiao and Hatton be trying to knock out the other, they'll do everything in their power to beat each other up.

Maybe the most intriguing thing about this fight is the style clash. Boxer-puncher versus swarmer. In this case the boxer-puncher's trainer has predicted a sensational knockout over the bigger opponent. On the other hand, the trainer of the swarmer says he's added a few wrinkles into his fighter's arsenal. What if Pacquiao can't hold Hatton off? What if Hatton can't get inside and has to box Pacquiao?

It's not often that it can be said that both fighters are guaranteed to show up in the best condition they've ever been in for a fight, something that is very believable with Manny Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton. Neither fighter cares about what's been said or written, nor what

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anyone but those inside their own faction think or believe. Manny and Ricky also have always sought to fight the best they could. Sure, they've participated in a few set-ups, but there's no such thing as a fighter who fought for a title, let alone won it, who hasn't. Not a single one, at least in the gloved era.

Currently in boxing the heavyweight division is in the doldrums, and that's in no way a shot at the Klitschkos. To their credit they always show up and give their best. It's not their problem or fault that their contemporaries don't put as much into it as they do. On top of that, neither of the K-brothers have ducked or avoided any heavyweight who was a perceived threat. The most compelling fighter in the light heavyweight division is 44 years old, and is looking to either fight legacy enhancing bouts, or to break the bank. And you can't really blame Bernard Hopkins for that at this stage of his career.

In what used to be boxing's glamor division, the middleweight division, the fighter who's been in front of the public the most and who beat the lineal champ was taken apart by Hopkins late last year. In fact, the sooner Kelly Pavlik admits it and stops lying to himself about having an off night, the better he'll be. Paul Williams, who recently beat Winky Wright in his last fight, looks like he has a chance to be a huge force at middleweight, but he's a fight or two away from fighting either Arthur Abraham or Kelly Pavlik. Fighting in the division right below Pavlik, the fighter who was starting to make a name for himself, James Kirkland, is sitting in jail due to a weapons violation. So the junior middleweight division may be in limbo for a short time before there's a noteworthy fight to be made in it. The welterweight division recently got an infusion when Shane Mosley knocked out Antonio Margarito earlier this year. Mosley's demolition of Margarito has opened the door for all different match ups, possibly including tonight's winner.

Right now the action and best fights in boxing are happening at junior welterweight and below. Tonight's Pacquiao-Hatton bout should be worth the price of admission and provide plenty of sustained action either way it goes. Along with that, we'll have an idea of what boxing's next big fight may be tomorrow morning.

Can you say Pacquiao-Mayweather, or possibly Hatton-Mayweather II? Admit it, hearing Floyd Sr. go at Floyd Jr. is enough on it's own.