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This past weekend’s Ring magazine/IBO junior welterweight title bout between Manny Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton was the case of a great fighter confronting a good fighter. It can be said via the world’s best wordsmith, but stating it any other way is simply window dressing.

In Pacquiao's case, he's not just a great fighter, he's one of the best pound for pound fighters in fistic history. Many fighters from past eras would've met the same fate as Hatton.

Usually, most boxing fans can identify a great fighter when they see one. We all pretty much know what they look like. However, one thing exhibited by all-time greats that's seldom mentioned or discussed at length is how often do we see them get nailed with their opponent’s Sunday punch during a fight. Sure, greats like Sugar Ray Leonard and Larry Holmes kissed a few right hand bombs while in their prime from life-takers like Thomas Hearns and Earnie Shavers, but those occasions were few and far between.

This brings us back to Ricky Hatton. Ricky, is/was a very good fighter. Nobody compiles a record like his without crossing paths with some other upper-tier fighters. Believe me -- he is a much better fighter than his showing against Pacquiao would indicate. His record of 45-2 looks spectacular, especially with Mayweather and Pacquiao representing the (2).

When all is said and done, Hatton's downfall was more the case of Pacquiao's freakish ability than his own ineptness. Ricky is who he is. It wouldn't have mattered a bit had Eddie Futch, Ray Arcel, or Pacquiao's trainer Freddie Roach prepared him for his last fight. The outcome would've been the same every time. And nobody understands that better than Roach, who told the boxing press that he had the better fighter and great will always beat good.

This past Saturday night Ricky Hatton got caught with Manny Pacquiao's Sunday punch, a punch he never even saw, and probably wouldn't have slipped it had Manny told him it was coming. Boxing history is replete with good fighters getting nailed cleanly when they fight great fighters. Ask Jermain Taylor, Jeff Lacy or Zab Judah. I've heard it overstated and understated since the fight occured. You can break it down to -- he wasn't looking for the right-hook or Pacquiao's punch variation all you'd like, the reality is great fighters are born and Pacquiao has shown he knows how to deliver his power. And the ability to routinely deliver it against the upper-tier fighters he's fought is one of the things that defines his greatness.

It's bewildering thinking about what Hatton was confronted with in the form of Manny Pacquiao for the nearly six minutes the fight lasted. How about an opponent with faster hands who possessed a bigger punch, who could put them together better from any spot in the ring. There's no doubting that during training camp Ricky worked hard on not coming straight in, leaving himself wide open during and after exchanges. Not only did he have to hope to make Pacquiao miss, but he needed to make him pay too -- in order to have a chance to score the upset. In the gym with big gloves and head gear on he probably looked good and showed marked improvement defensively. But doing it in the gym while sparring and on fight-night are a

lifetime apart. Slipping and getting under punches sounds great and works every time against an imaginary opponent. In reality the list of fighters who can attack and push the fight and routinely make their opponent miss is quite short. And when the opponents whose offense is trying to be navigated go by the names Pacquiao and Mayweather, a lot of names will disappear from the list.

The problem is when a fighter gets hit during the heat of battle they revert back to what they feel most safe and comfortable doing. What we saw happen towards the end of the first round and into the second round was stimulated by a degree of panic and self preservation on Hatton's part. Unfortunately, Ricky didn't have the time or mindset to think his way through of what not to do while Manny was getting through with right-hooks and three punch combinations delivered with the intent of ending the fight. In fact, Pacquiao remarked after the fight that he knew after the first knockdown Hatton would be open for everything else. That's because fighters know.

After Ricky was dropped by Manny's right-hook, his thought process was consumed with, "What can I do to make this stop and stabilize the fight before it's over." Once that happened he drew on what he knows best, trying to inflict more hurt on the person who is hurting him and putting him on the canvas. The idea that by engaging Pacquiao might lead to his demise never entered his mind. Hatton’s thought was giving Manny something back to at least momentarily stop him from taking liberty with him. Once he was committed to that, there was no turning back. By that point Pacquiao had too much momentum and confidence. Even if Ricky fought like he had during his sparring sessions in preparation for the fight, there's no way Manny was going to allow him to fight smart and under control. He realized once the pressure was on he'd be able to force Hatton to engage with him.

When I hear it said that Hatton should've done this and shouldn't have done that, I ask myself, could those saying that really understand what pressure he was under and how fast everything was happening? Regardless of the training and film study a fighter puts in before the fight, greatness can't be simulated. That's what Ricky Hatton was dealing with the night of May 2nd, 2009.

The sport of boxing needs more Ricky Hattons. No, he's not a great fighter, but he stretched and got more out of his ability than a lot of other fighters who've won a title. He also never shortchanged the fans or himself. On top of that, he fought the best available opposition every time out. Believe me when I tell you, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao both respect Ricky Hatton. He just happened to walk into a trap set by Mayweather and was beaten to the punch by Pacquiao, two fighters who will most likely determine who was fighter of the decade when they meet sometime in late November or early December of this year.

Not every fighter can be Sugar Ray Robinson, Harry Greb, Joe Louis or Muhammad Ali. If all fighters were the equal of those greats we'd have no reason to marvel at them.

When good fighters confront great or all-time great fighters in the ring, it can end suddenly and painfully for the good or really good fighter.