

Why Mayweather MUST Beat Marquez And Pacquiao

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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A fighter's won-loss record isn't the be-all end-all, nor is it a real indication of how good or great he is. The truth teller and lie-detector is found in the level of opposition he's crossed paths with and defeated or fought evenly with during his career. The better the level of opposition the more you know how a particular fighter has fared against a raised level of resistance. It's resistance that fighters have to overcome when they're confronting each other for supremacy in the ring.

On July 18th, Floyd Mayweather Jr. 39-0 (25 KOs) will be fighting Juan Manuel Marquez 50-4-1 (37 KOs) in a catch-weight bout. The winner of Mayweather-Marquez will meet superstar Manny Pacquiao 49-3-2 (37 KOs) this coming November or December. If it's Mayweather, the winner between he and Pacquiao will be recognized as fighter of the decade "2000-2009." If Marquez upsets Mayweather, then he'll meet Pacquiao for a third time. After two fights contested over 24 rounds, Pacquiao and Marquez are separated by one point on the scorecards among the six judges who scored their two fights. The fact that Pacquiao and Marquez have already met twice leads to where I'm going here.

Although it won't be reflected in the purse between these three fighters encompassing two fights that'll take place during the second half of 2009, the truth is Floyd Mayweather needs Marquez and Pacquiao more than they need him. Mayweather is undefeated, yet it can be said without retort that Floyd has never shared a ring with another truly great fighter. Not Genaro Hernandez, Jesus Chavez, Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo, Phillip N'Dou, DeMarcus Corley, Arturo Gatti, Zab Judah, Carlos Baldimor, Oscar De La Hoya or Ricky Hatton. A few of them were borderline upper-tier and outstanding fighters, but great cannot be attached to a single one. Floyd's resume is good, not great.

Nobody questions that Pacquiao and Marquez are great fighters and have fought a few other greats besides each other. The fact is Marquez fought as a featherweight from 1993-2007. Since moving up he fought Pacquiao at 130 and Joel Casamayor and Juan Diaz at 135. Next he fights Mayweather who hasn't been below 140 in four years, at 144-147. Mayweather is significantly bigger than Marquez who will turn 36 one month after their fight. A fighter aged 35 who is Marquez's size is considered ancient.

As far as Mayweather fighting Pacquiao, it's the same scenario to a large degree. Pacquiao won his first title fighting as a flyweight in 1998. Manny was fighting as a junior lightweight just 14 months ago and will most likely meet Mayweather somewhere between 144-147. Marquez and Pacquiao don't need to beat Mayweather to justify their acclaimed greatness. Sure, beating him raises them to the highest level attainable, but their legacy doesn't hinge on it.

You can choose to look at it from every imaginable angle and it always comes out the same. If Mayweather loses to Marquez, he'll be remembered more for that defeat than any of his previous 39 wins. If he gets by Marquez (which I predict he will) and then loses to Pacquiao, again he'll be more remembered for that lone defeat than his 40 wins. That's not being a Floyd hater or a Juan and Manny worshiper -- that's just the way great fighters are judged at the

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highest level in professional boxing.

Some boxing observers have said Mayweather is exhibiting monumental heart and courage agreeing to bouts with Marquez and Pacquiao. To which I say, "You mean the same courage Barrera and Hatton recently demonstrated when they fought them"? As great as Juan and Manny are, Floyd is as skilled and marginally bigger than either of them compared to any fighter he's fought was to him. Especially Marquez who fought as a featherweight for 14 years.

I've heard many argue contending Mayweather's greatness. I'd be a fool not to concur that he's greatly skilled, and I'm no fool. Mayweather does possess a phenomenal skill set, not to the degree of Sugar Ray Leonard or Roy Jones in my opinion. But yes, he may be in the same class...only he's at the back of it. However, great fighters must be tested by other great fighters their size and in their relative prime. For one reason or another Floyd hasn't agreed to a fight in which there wasn't an angle tilting the outcome in his favor.

Remember, even though I know what he's doing, Floyd has professed many times that he's greater than Sugar Ray Robinson was. Not his equal, but greater? Something to which there isn't a morsel of a case to make on Mayweather's behalf. Robinson was far more skilled and did everything better than Floyd that a fighter could be asked to do. Oh, OK, maybe he got hit more, but that's because he took chances and tried to decapitate his opponent with every punch he threw. If I have to translate as to why that led him to getting hit more than Mayweather, stop reading this now.

Great fighters, especially all-time greats, are judged by who they fought and defeated. Ray Leonard is remembered for beating a one-loss Duran and winning their trilogy. He stopped Benitez and Hearn when they were undefeated and at or near their prime. Then after one fight in five years he fought at a higher weight than he ever did before in his career and beat Marvin Hagler, who hadn't lost in 11 years. No, it wasn't prime Hagler, but had Marvin not lost to Leonard he would've continued fighting (despite dropping hints of retiring) most likely and held the title for another couple years. The point being that nobody out there at the time was taking the title from Hagler had he not fought Leonard.

Floyd Mayweather has never fought a great fighter during his career. He's scheduled to fight two this year who are definitely smaller than him. One is practically 36 and the other weighed 106 pounds in his pro debut. He just can't lose to them and be considered a true all-time great. It cannot be argued that a loss to Marquez, or to Pacquiao after beating Marquez wouldn't stain Mayweather's legacy. Under the best-case scenario, Mayweather stops Marquez and decides Pacquiao. Personally, I believe he'll beat both by non-controversial decisions controlling the action most of the way. But that doesn't equate to Sugar Ray Leonard status -- along with a plethora of other greats that I assume boxing fans know.

Let it be said that when Floyd Mayweather fights Juan Manuel Marquez and then Manny Pacquiao, he'll be under monumental pressure to win both bouts. Because if he loses he'll be more remembered for the defeat he suffered than the wins he's compiled, something that was his choosing due to the way he managed his career and was judicious in the fights he took. Great fighters are measured and graded on how they performed in the signature bouts of their

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career. Not one of them is more remembered for the fights they lost instead of the ones they won.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. has no choice but to win his next two fights just in the hope of continuing the debate as to his worthiness on the list of greats or near greats.