

## If Mayweather Is Smart, He'll Fight Pacquiao NOW

Written by Frank Lotierzo  
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This past Saturday two big events unfolded that will more than likely affect the boxing landscape in the junior welterweight and welterweight divisions for the remainder of 2009. The first being the Floyd Mayweather versus Juan Manuel Marquez bout to be fought at a catch-weight limit of 144 was postponed due to Mayweather suffering a rib injury during training last week. A few hours after the press release for that went out, Miguel Cotto scored a 12-round split decision victory over Joshua Clottey to retain his WBO welterweight.

Ever since Mayweather announced he was coming out of retirement 16 months after his last fight, a few hours before Manny Pacquiao stopped Ricky Hatton in the second round to capture the IBO junior welterweight title, it's been widely accepted that a Pacquiao 49-3-2 (37 KOs) vs. Mayweather 39-0 (25 KOs) bout is the biggest fight in boxing. All Mayweather had to do was get past Marquez on July 18th. Assuming Mayweather got past Marquez all that would've remained to make the fight a reality were the fighters agreeing on the purse splits each would net from the fight. That no doubt would've been tougher than the fight they'd most likely deliver.

With both fighters being hell bent on a 60/40 split in their favor, it was hard to see either one conceding since both whole heartedly believe they're entitled to the bigger piece of the pie. And it's easy to see why they felt that way with Mayweather being undefeated and thought to have been the best pound-for-pound fighter in boxing when he retired, a title Pacquiao has earned since Mayweather's contrived retirement. Not only has Pacquiao succeeded Mayweather as the top fighter in boxing at the moment, he's also the biggest draw in the sport, a claim that Floyd has never been able to support. Regardless whether someone is a Mayweather fan or so-called hater, that's the truth.

All one needs to do is ask themself what's a bigger fight -- Pacquiao vs. Cotto/Mosley/Margarito or Mayweather vs. Cotto/Mosley/Margarito? The inescapable answer is it's Pacquiao who can deliver bigger PPV dollars fighting anyone of the other three, not Mayweather. And the reason for that is Pacquiao's fights are always exciting and action packed. Whereas Mayweather is more of a technician who takes the bullets out of his opponents' guns instead of engaging them in a shoot out. Boxing fans enjoy seeing skilled fighters who are explosive more than they do skilled craftsmen. That's not Mayweather's fault it's just the way it is.

The truth is Pacquiao holds all the cards regarding the purse split. Add to that Miguel Cotto is now the leader in the fight Manny Pacquiao sweepstakes coupled with Mayweather's fight with Marquez not even rescheduled yet -- Floyd is beginning to lose bargaining chips that he never really held. Which I'm sure hasn't gone unnoticed by Pacquiao and his promoter Bob Arum. That's why we'll probably start to see the hype for Pacquiao-Cotto begin to escalate, with the intent being to bring Mayweather to his senses and agree to a 60/40 or possibly a 57/43 purse split.

With Arum controlling the money it's hard to fathom that he really wants Pacquiao tying up with

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Cotto or Mosley, at least before he fights Mayweather, for one obvious reason. That being there's too much guaranteed money to chance. Physically, Pacquiao is in much deeper water fighting Cotto or Mosley than he is Mayweather. That's something that the avid Pacquiao faction might dispute, but then they'd probably see him as the favorite over anyone up to junior middleweight with the exception of Paul Williams.

That said, Cotto and Mosley have a much better chance of beating up and embarrassing Pacquiao than Mayweather does. In a fight with Cotto and especially Mosley, it's not a given that Manny's power would overwhelm them. And if he can't hold them off there's a real chance they could work him over pretty good, assuming they're not dead at the weight. However, if Pacquiao fights Mayweather it's doubtful he'll get stopped or take a beating. The more likely scenario is Mayweather will move away and look to box and counter Pacquiao as he presses forward. And there's no doubt about the fact that if the fight happens, Manny will have to go to Floyd because that's how he fights every opponent.

Mayweather should take a page out of Sugar Ray Leonard's playbook when he fought Marvin Hagler. And that's fight Pacquiao with no tune up fight like Leonard, who was coming off a much longer layoff than Floyd is, when he fought Hagler. Not only does it give him a convenient excuse if he loses, as it would've Leonard, but if he wins it makes it that much more satisfying and special.

Another reason why Mayweather should go straight to Pacquiao is -- what does he do if Pacquiao ends up fighting and beating Cotto? Not only does it take Cotto off the table for a future fight, but it gives Pacquiao even more bargaining power. Think about it. If Mayweather beats Marquez in September or October, if they even fight, and Pacquiao beats Cotto in November, not only does Mayweather have one less opponent to make a big fight with, but he loses even more power to negotiate for a purse split.

Then again maybe he could fight Shane Mosley, as he mentioned to Brian Kenny during their back-and-forth last month, who has five losses? Sure, that makes sense. Now fight Mosley when the risk/reward factor has never been more out of balance! No, I don't think so. If there's one thing Floyd Mayweather has shown beyond a doubt during his terrific career, it's that he's just too smart to take a fight with so much to lose and little to gain against such a formidable and dangerous opponent.

When all is said and done there's just no getting around it that Pacquiao-Mayweather should happen this coming November. The only way for that to happen is for Mayweather to come back to reality and try to raise Arum/Pacquiao as much as he can to increase his percentage above the 60/40 split they offered, something that can probably be achieved because Arum and Pacquiao would rather walk away with 57% of Manny's biggest payday instead of holding out for 60% and risk the fight never being realized due to unforeseen events. It's boxing and Arum has been involved in it since Cassius Clay arrived on the scene. So he knows there's no guarantee that Pacquiao beats Cotto or that maybe Mayweather's body doesn't betray him in a future fight.

As far as Mayweather there's no other viable option. Since his pro debut Floyd's career has

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been brilliantly managed. That said he's never been a box office draw. In the three high profile fights of his career he was at the short end of the purse split versus Arturo Gatti and Oscar De La Hoya. Only against Ricky Hatton did he garner the bigger percent. Yet the fight was a big PPV attraction because of the fact that Hatton drew from an entire country, something Mayweather likes to say about Spanish and Mexican fighters. Pacquiao wasn't the draw versus De La Hoya and split the purse with Hatton, but he won both of those fights impressively and that's why he's the top attraction in boxing as of this writing.

Most sophisticated boxing observers know that Mayweather's retirement was orchestrated and planned. The intent was to give him a rest and infuse interest in him for a comeback bout, on top of aiding him in avoiding competitive fights in boxing's most competitive division in which he fought, welterweight. The problem turned out to be that Pacquiao came along and defeated his two biggest name opponents, De La Hoya and Hatton, much more convincingly than he did. That isn't necessarily the be-all end-all, but it is to the boxing fans who put their money where their mouth is that buy PPV fights. That's why Pacquiao can call the shots.

So for the first time in his career Mayweather may have miscalculated and in a big way. The only thing left for him to do is realize that to become the man again in boxing he must fight Pacquiao this coming fall. Beating him would give Mayweather leverage if there's a rematch, something that's very plausible since if he did win it would most likely be by decision. On the other hand if he loses a close fight he can say he should've taken a tune up and may get a rematch.

If Floyd Mayweather is smart, he'll go straight to Pacquiao. Better do it soon, because the LA Times reports that Pacquiao and Cotto are in negotiations for a November match.