Written by Michael Woods
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Freddie Roach isn't simply the man who transformed a whirling dervish of kinetic energy into a technically adept, supremely focused hitter, he's Manny Pacquiao's most ardent fan.

OK, that mat be straying over the line, considering Manny whips more than 90 million of his countrymen, women and children into a frenzy of adoration typically reserved for deities. But Dedham Freddie has done more than any one person to bring Pacquiao to where he is today--the top of the pound for pound tier, or as Floyd Mayweather fans might assert, just beneath that level.

Mayweather's mastery on Sept. 19 against Juan Manuel Marquez had some pundits re-installing the American atop the P4P platform, despite his shadily obtained weight advantage. I moved into that camp myself, and suppose disagreements will have to stand until the inevitable showdown between Pacman and Mayweather. I say inevitable because I firmly believe that Pacquiao's hand speed is two notches better than Miguel Cotto's, and that he will add to Miguel's tattoo collection with shots Cotto doesn't see coming on Nov. 14. Speed equals power equals another improbable win for Pacquiao, and the seventh title, in the seventh weight division since he turned pro in 1995. My certainty, though, seems slight in comparison to that of Roach, who on a Wednesday conference call with Manny and promoter Bob Arum, made his case for Pacman being an all-time, pound for pound great.

With the win over Cotto, who holds the WBO title, by virtue of a hair-thin decision victory in his first defense against Joshua Clottey in June, Freddie says Manny will join a select crew. I didn't get a chance to ask Coach Roach who he has installed at the top of his own P4P list, but whoever is on the short list, he says Manny should join 'em.

The win would elevate Manny, Roach said, to the "five best of all time in any era.

"He's getting better and better," Roach said of the Filipino, who he termed a "Henry Armstrong-type guy." That Hall of Famer, of course, held the featherweight, lightweight and welterweight titles at the same time, and is on everybody's all-time top 5 list. Manny's 7 at 7 feat, Freddie said, will be "one of the greatest achievements ever," and he lumped in Manny with other multi-title greats like Sugar Ray Leonard and Thomas Hearns.

TSS U, let's bring you all into the mix. You on board with Roach's statement? Is Cotto enough of a test for you for Manny? You're not going to indulge in something that irks Roach to no end, and tear down Miguel after Manny has his way with him, are you?

Roach on the Wednesday call expressed annoyance that some pundits and fans blow off Manny's wins against Oscar De La Hoya, especially, and Ricky Hatton, dismissing the beaten men as shells of what they once were by the time they got to Manny.

Roach also broke a bit of news when he said that it is quite likely Manny will stop out at welterweight. No 154, then? "I don't think so," Roach said. "We're pretty close to our limit. We have to feed him five times a day to keep his weight up." That said, Roach said his confidence of a KO win comes from the power that Manny is showing during pad work. "At this weight, he's punching so much harder than he ever has. Cotto's defense isn't good enough, he's hittable."

Then again, Roach didn't go out of his way to present Cotto as high hurdle. He called him a "very good fighter" but didn't agree when someone offered that he could likely be the "biggest challenge" of Manny's career. "I'm very confident in my guy," said the trainer. "The power he has, he's gonna knock Cotto out. I'm very confident and look forward to a win. Cotto has never fought a guy like Manny, with his speed. I don't think he can handle our speed."

The trainer noted that the beating at the hands of Antonio Margarito (and are we ever going to get an answer to the question how many other times Margarito used loaded wraps of the type he was going to use against Shane Mosley?) took something out of Cotto, but that he's been building up his confidence incrementally since that July 2008 horror show. "Our job is to take that confidence away right away," said Roach, who expects Cotto to be in counterpuncher mode.

Some TSS readers have written comments touching on Cotto's perceived power edge. I haven't bought it, having believed for several years that Cotto's power is overrated, and that he didn't bring it all with him to 147. Roach seems to be of the same mind. "(Power) doesn't win, boxing ability wins fights, and Manny is the better boxer," he said. Pacquiao, being the humble human he is, lauded Cotto and told all that he's "not underestimating Cotto's capability in boxing." The boxer shrugged off an earlier Roach pronouncement, that Pacman would KO Cotto in the first round. He takes a kayo if the timing is right, he said.

Roach said that the first 24/7 episode captured the turmoil of Manny's camp in the Philippines correctly. Strength and conditioning coach Alex Ariza got into it with advisor Michael Koncz, and smacked Koncz. Viewers also saw Roach getting heated when Pacquiao wouldn't leave the typhoon-plagued section they were holed up in, and kept putting off an exit to a place with more placid weather patterns. Viewers are left to wonder if this sparring and sniping will affect Pacman. Likely not...there have been factions in Pacquaio's camps for years, and the fighter shrugs off the drama like politicians shrug off tugs from their minute consciences.

Of a rumored tentative date for Pacman, Bob Arum wouldn't go there, saying that he wants to concentrate on Nov. 14, not March 13, when Pacquiao (or Cotto) could perhaps tangle with Floyd Mayweather.

Drop your early pred here, and feel free to amend the guess, after checking out the remaining 24/7s or off a gut call, or what have you.