

BORGES IS BACK, Wants Pacquiao-Marquez III

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 25 November 2010 19:00

Who next for Manny Pacquiao?

That is the biggest question in boxing because he is the biggest name in boxing. Some might argue he is the only name in boxing. At least he is the only name capable of drawing fan interest outside of the sport's tight inner circle of faithful fanatics and aficionados.

While boxing is on the rise once again around the world, no one would argue that it is what it used to be in the United States but Pacquiao is a phenomenon almost beyond understanding. A cult hero to Filipinos around the world, he has somehow managed to transcend the sport itself to become what boxing desperately needs but has little of – a personality.

In the weeks and months leading up to his one-sided victory over three-time welterweight champion Antonio Margarito, Pacquiao was profiled in such decidedly non-boxing venues as National Public Radio, The Wall Street Journal, Esquire, GQ, TIME, American Airlines flight magazine (with a trapped in an airplane audience of an estimated 3 million readers), Atlantic Monthly (ATLANTIC MONTHLY?) and on CBS' 60 Minutes in a segment that followed one on President Barack Obama.

Because of that the world larger than boxing wants to know two things: when will he fight undefeated Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and if he's not going to fight him who will he square off with next spring?

The prevailing assumption is that a fight with Mayweather, which would be a megabout likely to break the all-time pay-per-view record set by Mayweather and Oscar De La Hoya two years ago of 2.4 million buys, is unlikely because both Mayweather and his trainer, his uncle Roger, both are facing serious legal charges in Las Vegas that could carry with them jail terms and because there is no love lost between Mayweather and Pacquiao's promoter, Bob Arum.

Only in a world as oddly upside down as boxing would the latter be a factor in whether or not the sport's No. 1 event would be held but it is a real dilemma and so other names are being floated around if Mayweather remains unavailable for what is being projected as a bout that would pay each man at least \$25 million.

Because of the way Pacquiao (52-3-2 38 KO) handily destroyed Margarito at a catch weight of 150 pounds, many are urging him to push his body even farther and challenge middleweight champion Sergio Martinez, who just knocked out Paul Williams with one punch a week ago.

That, to me, is absurd. There are weight limits in boxing for a reason. Pacquiao, who began his career fighting at 106 pounds and has since won legitimate world title all the way up to 147 pounds (the super welterweight title the WBC awarded him for defeating Margarito was, in fact, not at the 154-pound limit and hence a charade not a championship.

If Pacquiao and trainer Freddie Roach felt the need to limit Margarito to 150 pounds why would they agree to face the 160-pound champion? It would make no sense and frankly be foolhardy,

BORGES IS BACK, Wants Pacquiao-Marquez III

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 25 November 2010 19:00

especially when one considers the fact Pacquiao admitted to having his share of difficulties with Margarito's strength at a weight 10 pounds below the middleweight limit.

While many may call for such a fight they will not be the onest having to take the punches or the one trying to do enough damage to win against a man better able simply by size to absorb the punishment Pacquiao tends to deal out.

Arum at first tried to sell the idea of a rematch with Miguel Cotto or fistic free agent Shane Mosley but both are a sham. Though still able to beat most second tier fighters, Mosley is past his prime and, as he proved in a lopsided loss to Mayweather, is no longer in the elite class of a guy like Pacquiao. As for Cotto, Pacquiao already undressed him once in an utterly one-sided victory that requires no replay.

One possibility is undefeated welterweight champion Andre Berto, although the argument against that will be that Berto is not yet a big enough draw to be even the B side of a Pacquiao fight. The only problem with that argument is he's a bigger draw than Joshua Clottey and Pacquiao-Clottey drew 50,000 at Cowboys Stadium in Texas.

Another possibility is the winner of the Tim Bradley (26-0, 11 KO) vs. Devon Alexander (21-0, 13 KO) super lightweight unification (140 pound) fight, a match that would allow Pacquiao to drop back to a more comfortable fighting weight since he normally boxes at no higher than 145 pounds regardless of the size of his opponent.

The problem there is the same as the Berto situation in that neither Bradley or Alexander are recognizable names to anyone but the most astute boxing fan.

Which brings me to the man Pacquiao really should fight next. If a fight with Mayweather (41-0, 25 KO) is not possible the next man in line should be a fighter who has faced Pacquiao twice and many believe has not yet lost to him – Juan Manuel Marquez.

Marquez fought a draw with Pacquiao in 2004 and lost a split decision to him four years later. Both decisions were loudly protested by many who felt Marquez did enough to win both fights and in each case Pacquiao struggled against an opponent many consider one of the most highly skilled boxers in the world.

This weekend Marquez will defend his WBA and WBO lightweight (135 pound) titles from the challenge of the new Arturo Gatti – Michael Katsidis – and if he comes out of that fight victorious a fight with Pacquiao would be easily promotable. All one would need to do is show their first two fights on HBO a few times and who wouldn't want to see a third?

Pacquiao conceded earlier this week in Manila that he is willing to face Marquez a third time despite the hell he gave him in their first two fights, oddly arguing that while he's willing he doesn't believe the fight would sell because "I would not watch Pacquiao vs. Marquez."

Would he not watch it or does he simply not want to go through a third war with the feisty Mexican?

BORGES IS BACK, Wants Pacquiao-Marquez III

Written by Ron Borges

Thursday, 25 November 2010 19:00

Only Pacquiao knows the answer to that but the fact is Marquez has a style that gives him fits. He has proven able to take his best shots and get off the canvas and fight his way back into close matches with Pacquiao. He's also shown the skill to attack him where he's most vulnerable and has never had a problem either hitting Pacquiao or keeping up with his volume of punches.

The only real question marks are Marquez's age (he's 37 and has begun to show signs of slippage, even though he's still in the top four in most pound-for-pound ratings) and the fact that Pacquiao is now a bigger man than he was when they fought at featherweight (126) and super featherweight (130).

Yet Pacquiao could make 140 pounds if he wants, having to shave off only five pounds from the weight he carried when he beat up Margarito. That would seem to be a fair compromise, Marquez having to move up five pounds from the lightweight limit and Pacquiao come down the same amount from his last fight.

Yet the fact is Pacquiao doesn't have to do that because he is the new king of pay-per-view revenue and hence can dictate – and quite often has – whatever terms he wants. It would seem more likely he'd try to force Marquez to fight him at 145, a weight that was clearly uncomfortable for Marquez and counterproductive.

Would Juan Manuel Marquez accept a third fight with Pacquiao at 145 pounds? Probably so but if Manny Pacquiao wants to give his sport another shot in the arm he should face his old Mexican nemesis at 140 pounds. Who knows? Considering how the first two ended, they might very well be able to do it a fourth time as well, a throwback to the Golden Age of boxing in America when closely competitive guys like this faced off regularly without any dropoff in fan interest.

In the end, Manny Pacquiao will fight who he wants at whatever terms he wants but if he can't convince Floyd Mayweather, Jr. to settle the difference between them for one of the biggest paydays in boxing history he should welcome the chance to face a man many in boxing don't yet fully believe he's beaten yet – Juan Manuel Marquez.