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Friday, 12 March 2010 18:00

Imagine being the marquee attraction in your profession, and the better you perform, the more some of your competitors and peers will tarnish your body of work and accomplishments. On the other hand if you only look good, and not spectacular, it'll be said in some corners and factions that it was because you didn't cheat or circumvent the rules this time. In other words if Joshua Clottey upsets Manny Pacquiao tonight, it'll be inferred by some that Pacquiao was clean of PEDs instead of heaping the due praise on Clottey for finally stepping up and fighting to his true potential.

That's the conundrum Manny Pacquiao 50-3-2 (38) is in tonight heading into his WBO welterweight title defense with Joshua Clottey 35-3 (20). What will really work against him in the eyes of some is if he has a terrific showing and perhaps even stops Clottey. It'll be thought of as being too much of an overwhelming performance and almost incomprehensible. And that's because almost every fight observer who knows what they're watching is in agreement that Clottey has a cast-iron chin and is also very durable and physically strong.

What surprised most fans and writers as they observed the early rounds of the Pacquiao-Cotto bout was how Cotto was hurt with the first couple left crosses that Pacquiao got through with cleanly. From that moment on Miguel immediately sensed that it was safer to punch before and after Pacquiao -- and at all cost not to get caught in exchanges or punching with him. That literally had many of those watching the fight astonished after it was said repeatedly how Cotto was the supposed stronger fighter physically. Especially since the question before the fight was more of how Manny would hold up under Cotto's assault than the opposite.

Joshua Clottey is known for being extremely durable and in fights against Antonio Margarito, Zab Judah and Miguel Cotto he seldom changed his facial expression after sampling the best they had to offer over 33 rounds. What if Pacquiao comes out and after catching Clottey with a couple of the Sunday left-crosses that he did Cotto, Clottey is holding on and fighting to survive instead of fighting to win after the third or fourth round? No doubt most watching will be shocked and dismayed by seeing Clottey bothered by his opponents assault for the first time in his career.

Obviously there will be a faction watching who will say he's gotta be doing some kind of PED's and they'll immediately dismiss his explosive and shocking power as simply being manufactured. And by the way, if it ever comes out down the road that PEDs were the source of Pacquiao's strength and power - not only was he a cheater, he also had the best dealer and supplier in the history of sports. Because there's certainly no other Robo-fighter in amateur or professional boxing.

So there is a down side if Pacquiao scores a spectacular win over Clottey.

Conversely, if Pacquiao has life and death and labors to a narrow decision win, we'll hear how he finally faced an upper-tier welterweight who wasn't old and washed up nor was he

compromised by having to suck down to 145 in order to make the fight.

Pacquiao's overwhelming victories in his last two bouts against Ricky Hatton and Miguel Cotto has set the bar of expectation very tonight against Clottey. If Pacquiao goes through Clottey, it'll be too much for some to handle and it'll be easier for them to live in their little cocoon rationalizing to themselves that he's getting over and cheating in one form or another. That, or they'll say Clottey wasn't any good, which is downright ignorant, and that's what they expected to happen, as opposed to accepting that Pacquiao can really fight.

On the other hand if Pacquiao struggles, some will assume he was clean for this fight and finally fought a real welterweight in his prime. Regardless of how Pacquiao performs against Clottey tonight, he'll be damned either way for looking too good or just getting by. He's in a no win spot with some and that won't change after tonight's fight is history.

And that's what will continue to cause a sense of urgency and excitement whenever Pacquiao fights. This is what happens to most athletes who become an iconic figure. Those who love them will overlook any faults, those who hate them will find a way to minimize any accomplishments, no matter how spectacular.

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