

Road Of The Little Titans Timothy Bradley & Manny Pacquiao

Written by David A. Avila

Wednesday, 06 June 2012 22:54

When Timothy "Desert Storm" Bradley first stepped into the professional prize ring the crowd didn't know what to expect that blistering hot day in Corona as he faced another debuting boxer.

The fight took place outdoors at Omega Products International where temperatures can soar to a sweaty 115 degrees in August. As both fighters engaged at the sound of the bell it was obvious there was a difference in not only physical appearance, but Bradley was simply too athletic for the other fighter.

Bradley forced a stoppage of the fight in round two as referee Lou Moret decided that the other debuting prizefighter Francisco Martinez had run into a buzz saw. From that moment on a lot of other boxers were cut to pieces by the Bradley buzz saw.

Nearly eight years have passed and now Bradley (28-0, 12 KOs) looks to topple one of the top prizefighters in the world in Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao (54-3-2, 38 KOs) on Saturday June 9, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. The Filipino southpaw has a similar story.

The first time I saw Pacquiao perform in person was in 2003 against Emmanuel Lucero. The fight fittingly occurred at the Olympic Auditorium where a number of great Filipino fighters of the past like Speedy Dado and Ceferino Garcia had engaged in numerous battles before sold out crowds at the boxing palace in downtown Los Angeles.

Lucero was an undefeated Mexican fighter out of New York City. Pacquiao had been training at the Wild Card Gym for a couple of years under Freddie Roach. Before the fight the trainer was relaying to me about his trip to the Philippines with Pacquiao. He had no concerns about the fight. He was right. A vicious Pacman left uppercut ended the night for the bob and weave style of Lucero in round three.

It was the first and last time Pacquiao would fight in the Olympic Auditorium. The venerable boxing venue would be sold two years later and changed into a Korean church.

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Pacquiao was about to change the landscape of boxing in his next fight that came four months later in San Antonio. Marco Antonio Barrera would find out first hand the speed and power of Pacquiao. He overwhelmed the Mexico City warrior and stopped him in 11 rounds.

Six months later another Mexico City warrior Juan Manuel Marquez would be dropped three times before realizing how to fight Pacquiao on May 2004. Several months later Bradley would become a professional.

Crowd booed

In the beginning Bradley was a mix of speedy footwork and fancy blistering combinations. He would dance around the ring and perform Muhammad Ali-like movements to the disdain of the crowd. When he fought Raul Nunez in October 2004, at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario, the crowd booed Bradley though he won easily. That seemed to end the showmanship antics.

One month later Bradley returned to the Doubletree Hotel and fought Luis Medina. The fight lasted 18 seconds as the "Desert Storm" showed up and obliterated Medina. Referee Jack Reiss stopped it. From that point on the Palm Springs boxer became a professional prizefighter intent on ending the fight as quick as possible.

Under the tutelage of Joel Diaz, the eldest of the Coachella's fighting Diaz brothers, the Palm Springs junior welterweight began to morph into a fighting machine capable of stopping bigger and seemingly stronger opponents.

Perhaps Bradley's most significant victory came on July 21, 2005 when he faced Brazil's Marcos Andre Rocha Costa. His record said no victories and one defeat, but his trainer said the tall Brazilian southpaw was actually 10-1. When the two combatants entered the ring Bradley had to crane his neck to look at Rocha who was clearly 6-feet tall. Nobody told the promoters that the Brazilian was a southpaw. It looked pretty bad for Bradley.

In the first few rounds Bradley had problems trying to figure out Rocha who knew how to use his size and reach. Around the third round Bradley decided to go for broke and saw some success.

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But in round four he ran into a Rocha left hand and was wobbled. It looked bad for Bradley who fought out of the Brazilian's onslaught.

Round five began and the partisan-Bradley crowd sensed their fighter was in trouble. He wasn't. The desert prizefighter erupted on Rocha with a fury and shocked the taller fighter who expected to dominate. Instead, the Brazilian was dominated by Bradley who attacked so furiously that even the crowd was in shock. Bradley stopped Rocha at 2:15 of the fifth round. It was Bradley's moment of truth and he proved that he indeed had a fighter's heart and determination.

Now here they are Bradley and Pacquiao.

Equal size and heart

"Bradley is a different type of fighter and we don't take this fight lightly. We have trained hard for Bradley because he is the type of fighter we cannot underestimate. Tim Bradley is undefeated and he is a champion," said Pacquiao, 33, during a conference call. "The fights are all different."

Indio's desert fighter Bradley is confident that Pacquiao has not faced his style or intensity before.

"I systematically break guys down. I get in the ring and they (opponents) say I don't have any power but then they feel me and feel my strength. As soon as they get hit they want to hold me. The last couple of fights guys have been holding me all night," Bradley, 28, said.

Both champions are rather small for the welterweight weight class of today. Of course back in the 1950s and earlier welterweights like Carmen Basilio were of similar size and height. And like that Hall of Fame boxer, both have the heart.

"Bradley beat a pretty good fighter in Lamont Peterson," said Top Rank's Bob Arum, adding that

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at the time both fought he was promoting Peterson. "Peterson was and is a very good fighter."

Of course the world knows how good Pacquiao is and gets an opportunity to measure Bradley's abilities on Saturday. The fight will be shown on HBO pay-per-view.

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