

Why Provodnikov Will Most Likely Be Pacquiao's Next Opponent

Written by Frank Lotierzo

Thursday, 05 December 2013 00:00



He lost two fights in a row, one controversially to Timothy Bradley 31-0 (12) and then six months later he was knocked out by his career nemesis Juan Manuel Marquez 55-7-1 (40) in a devastating fashion. Yes I'm talking about welterweight star Manny Pacquiao 55-5-2 (38). This time last month there were questions surrounding Manny's dedication and desire along with the query if he still had it as a world class fighter and we wondered, can he fight the mental demons associated with a fighter suffering a brutal knockout loss where he was out on the canvas face down for over a minute? Well, it only took one fight for Pacquiao to erase all doubts and now he's back to being, at the least, the second most compelling fighter in professional boxing after Floyd Mayweather.

Two weeks ago Manny administered a one-sided beating to the rugged and determined Brandon Rios 31-2-1 (23) over the course of 12 rounds. Pacquiao handled the limited Rios with total ease and it's doubtful that he lost a single minute of a 36 minute fight. And you know what, looking back, it was an easy fight to predict and break down, as long as you knew for certain that Manny still retained 90% of the skills and zeal that he had two years ago, and only one person knew that, trainer Freddie Roach. Obviously, Pacquiao is the fighter Roach will be remembered for most as a trainer. On top of that Freddie has been with Manny long enough to know if and how much he's slipped as a fighter. Roach said before the Rios fight that it would almost like shooting fish in a barrel and it was. There's no way Roach would put Pacquiao in with a fighter who he thought going in had more than a remote chance of hurting him. Which is why the Mayweather fight will always be there because Roach knows if Mayweather beats Manny, it'll be via decision and Manny won't get hurt enroute to earning a King's ransom.

Knowing that Roach sincerely has Pacquiao's best interest and health in my mind, it's safe to say that if he puts Manny in with another tough and determined fighter, he's pretty sure of how the fight will unfold as it was the case with Rios. That's why I believe the talk of Manny fighting Ruslan Provodnikov 23-2 (16) next April is starting to make news.

When I first heard of Bob Arum talking about Pacquiao fighting Provodnikov next, I thought, I don't think I'd go that route if the goal is still to get Mayweather in the ring. Then I thought about it and realized that it makes perfect sense on two fronts. Think about it, boxing on HBO has now

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gotten to the point that they can "make" a fighter a PPV attraction based on *just two fights*. Provodnikov is getting a serious look as a possible Pacquiao opponent based entirely on the Bradley fight (and, say what you will, he lost the decision). After that Ruslan fought Mike Alvarado 34-2 (23) and it's clear that Mike was done after the two wars with Rios. Provodnikov looked like a real life-taker versus Alvarado in his last bout. He showed that he'll apply bell-to-bell pressure with a big target in front of him. Ruslan knows how to cut off the ring, he's willing to mix it up with anybody and he can get his man out of there with either hand. Provodnikov, based on his last two fights could be a great dance partner for Manny at the gate because boxing fans know that as long as the fight lasts they'll definitely get their money's worth. In summary, Provodnikov fits the bill perfectly as a legitimate opponent for Pacquiao in April of next year.

Secondly, there's the Roach matchmaking factor. He knows that Marquez will always give Manny trouble and win or lose, his fighter won't emerge from the fight as the world beater he did after taking Rios apart. Timothy Bradley would probably be the biggest fight for Pacquiao aside from Mayweather. However, with Bradley having officially defeated Pacquiao, Provodnikov and Marquez, Timothy will demand equal billing and money. And we know that Roach/Pacquiao see it differently and although it would be nice to exact some ring revenge on Bradley, they don't need him.

Enter Ruslan Provodnikov, who would no doubt love to get a shot at one of boxing's most popular and best pound-for-pound fighters on the planet. Roach has watched Pacquiao and Provodnikov work and spar together numerous times. If anyone knows how Manny and Ruslan match up, it's Roach. And do you really think that Freddie Roach would okay the Provodnikov fight if he wasn't entirely certain, based on all the sparring Provodnikov had done with Manny, that he wasn't a 100% safe opponent who would make his fighter look good? I say Freddie wouldn't sign on to having Manny fight Provodnikov unless he thought Provodnikov's only shot was to land a lottery punch. And the fact of the matter is, Manny is too quick of hand and foot to be bulldozed or steamrolled by the aggressive Provodnikov, as much as it would be fun to watch him try.

Yes boxing fans, Manny Pacquiao is back to being one of the main players on the professional boxing scene again. He looked terrific in his last fight, he's still a blast to watch fight and get off and he certainly still loves to fight. No, he can't make the fight he really wants against Mayweather, or should I say he's not willing to capitulate enough to get it, despite the fact that Mayweather now believes he can defeat him instead of a few years ago when he only thought it. Most likely we'll next see Manny Pacquiao in the ring against Ruslan Provodnikov during the spring of 2014. It'll be a terrific fight and it makes dollars and sense on behalf of both fighters.

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Radam G says:

I'm not riding with the Siberian Rocky being Da Manny's next dance partner in Sin City. This would be a HBO fight. And the HBO PPV powers that be ain't having it.

Da Manny dancing with his sparringmate in Sin City can't pass the stank-ho PPV-smell test. Besides haterrade is being poured on Da Manny by the U.S. mainlanders. They buy Money May's bullsytology of being able to easily beat Da Manny, so Lil' Floyd doesn't need to prove it by doing da dance. [He'd get knocked da double fudge out!]

Money May will go down in annals of history of "woulda and coulda beat Pacquiao." These haters even now claim that Tim Bradley did indeed beat Da Manny and would do it "more convincingly next time." Wow! What jive-turkey blindness and alternative reality that _____ hatred produces.

It is always woulda and coulda won that turns on the U.S. mainlanders. The bubbles of fantasies are boss to the realities of just doing da d@mn thing to U.S. mainlanders.

Family May knows what it is if Money May ever steps in dat squared jungle across from Da Manny. Holla!

gibola says:

Don't make this fight - a waste of 6 months of everyone's lives. Pacman proved he wasn't shot by handling Rios - Provodnikov (like Rios) is too slow of hand and foot to get to Manny and will lose widely on points. There, I've summed the whole thing up in two lines - there's no need for the fight to happen. Don't waste the little time you have left in the game on meaningless matches Manny. You did that with the whole Clotey-Margarito-Mosley era. Fight Bradley, JMM, PBF or even Khan, Alexander, Broner would be better matchups than Povodnikov. He doesn't matchup so don't make the matchup!

leon30001 says:

I agree with the above; I'd like to see Manny-Broner, that would create a lot of buzz and there are a lot of intangibles (obviously I want Manny-Floyd but Floyd is scared as we know).

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I don't want to see Bradley; Manny already completely outclassed him I seem to remember. And I don't want to see Marquez...4 is enough, surely?! Plus his whining, griping and bitching really grates and I just don't want to see him PERIOD.

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=gibola;40808]Don't make this fight - a waste of 6 months of everyone's lives. Pacman proved he wasn't shot by handling Rios - Provodnikov (like Rios) is too slow of hand and foot to get to Manny and will lose widely on points. There, I've summed the whole thing up in two lines - there's no need for the fight to happen. Don't waste the little time you have left in the game on meaningless matches Manny. You did that with the whole Clotney-Margarito-Mosley era. Fight Bradley, JMM, PBF or even Khan, Alexander, Broner would be better matchups than Povodnikov. He doesn't matchup so don't make the matchup![/QUOTE]

This guy Gibola doesnt pull any punches. Great comments..I also think Paq could be too quick for Provodnikov. But the thing about Provodnikov is that he is the ultimate STRESS TEST. If there is anything lacking in Paq's game Ruslan will reveal them. Although Provodnikov is beatable he's all but guaranteed to leave hard evidence that his opponent was in a war.

On a different noteI don't agree with fighters not fighting friends. Many pro athletes athletes are friendly off the court and off the field...but have you ever seen an NFL player refuse to play because his friend was playing on the opposite side of the field?

Its like a previous customer trying to stop a hooker from having sex with another man because he's fallen in love with her. ...its just business.....Although boxing is more intimate than most sports...friendships should not deter possible encounters.

I do believe Paq should fight Bradley again... Let JMM retire in peace with his incredible victory to seal his legacy.. but there is unfinished business between Bradley an Pac that MUST be resolved.

With Paq's diminished punching power...Bradley has an opportunity to improve on his original performance. .. With the exception of JMM..... no one else except Bradley has looked as good against Paq.

Radam G says:

Wow, B-Sug! It is nothing wrong with Da Manny's punching power. He'd kayo Bradley and Provodnikov. But for WHAT? He is a prizefighter -- not a pride fighter.

Bradley needs to settle a pride-fight score with the Russian Rocky. Home cooking and Asian hate have been nice to Bradley. Dude is a two-loss undefeated _____! Holla!

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Holla![/QUOTE]

That knife cuts both ways...RG... Many people felt JMM beat Paq 3 out of 4 times and # 4 was the definitive conclusion. Bradley could have lost the fight against Ruslan if the ref had called the first knockdown but Bradley is a fighter who will change his tactics ...if they fought again Tim would be riding the bike all night.

Paq needs that definitive win against Bradley to set the record straight. Hardcore fans know who won that fight... But the general average Joe excepts the verdict....Vindication is vital for Paq.

Radam G says:

YUP! Ditto DAT, B-Sug! It cuts both ways. Many believe that Da Manny beat Marquez three out of four bouts and was destroying him the fourth time until Da Manny got careless and the whining-@ss Marquez -- full of dat syet -- turned into the one-shot Hulkquez and hit the LOTTO.

Da Manny needs no vindication with Bradley. He already definitively whip Bradley's arse 10 rounds to two. In a poll held by several elite boxing-reporting outfits -- including Yahoo and USA-Today, just to name a couple -- 94 percent of the fans don't care for a Bradley-Pacquiao rematch and believe that PacMan already clearly BEAT Bradley. Holla!

kidcanvas says:

i dont want manny to fight this guy .. i give him a big chance to upset him . floyd be a safe fight if he could bring himself to the ring

SouthPaul says:

The Floyd, Manny bout isn't happening until the twilight years. It has no expiration date, it's shelf life is unlimited. Boxings very own special preservative. It's a lock to sell. And big it will no matter the date, time, records. None of that will matter. In the mean time everyone involved will get richer. And you'll be picking up the tab, Kidcanvas. How do you like 'dem apples, son?

Don't trip, I am a fan too, so I'll be chipping in!

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;40860]YUP! Ditto DAT, B-Sug! It cuts both ways. Many believe that Da Manny beat Marquez three out of four bouts and was destroying him the fourth time until Da Manny got careless and the whining-@ss Marquez -- full of dat syet -- turned into the one-shot Hulkquez and hit the LOTTO.

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You make a good point about the poll but again I have to disagree RG.....That was no lottery punch JMM caught Paq diving in with a perfect counter, and everyone felt the judging was horrible for their #3rd fight.....the first two were more subjective and could go either way depending on what you like.. However the poll from HBO was actually 91% against.

But its a moot point because it was Paq who wanted the rematch and Bradley who refused in order to take the easier fight with JMM.

Now seeing that Arum won't fight Paq against anyone of the young lions in Al Haymans' stable there is very little choice but Ruslan or Bradley. The fight can't do worse than the 340,000 PPV buys purchased for Paq vs Rios. Fans would be pleased to see Paq revenge the Bradley loss. Vindication...RevengeRedemption...what more can be asked for in regards to a storyline? Unless HBO & TR recruit some popular big name welters..... Paq's choices are pretty limited.

Well there are two ready made opponents at 154 ..Cotto and Canelo but I won't hold my breath waiting for those.

Radam G says:

Not perfect at all. By stepping on his toe -- a nice trick of the trade. And a fight with Bradley will do worst than 340,000 ppv payouts or even 250,000 -- what Bradley and Marquez likely did. BTW, the rising, official ppv payouts of the Rios-Pacquiao is now over 480,000 and will likely end up at 550,000.

The hype about Al Hymen is going overboard. He doesn't have anything young lions that could wear Da Mann y's jock strap.

amayseng says:

The Russian is a fan friendly fighter for sure and he and Pac match up for more fireworks than the SLOW ***

Rios, whos feet look like they are in quick sand. Rios foot agility is so POOR he makes Froch look quick.

I am down for a Pac for Russian fight. I like both guys and would be happy to see Prov get a good payday

while Pac beats him up

Radam G says:

The Siberian Rocky is not fighting Da Manny.

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TSR is next fighting either Big Foot Bradley/The Cali Cranium Crusher or whining-@ss-never-lost-a-bout-in-his-mind Marquez/Hulkquez, if either of these _____ develop some cojones and SIGN the contract!

I doubt that it will be Hulkquez, because he doesn't want to be tested by VADA. VADA would nail his arse for those PEDs and roids that the "Fallen" Angel Heredia has been feeding him through rubbing, juicing and toe-and-crack-of-the-@\$ injecting.

TSR will get a million-dollar-plus payday in his next bout, but, again, not against Da Manny. Holla!

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=Radam G;40894]The Siberian Rocky is not fighting Da Manny.

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RG, I don't have this from firsthand sources so take this with a grain of salt but I have read some interesting things that suggest Memo can beat VADA.

As for JMM, I really just think he likes that image of Pacquiao flat on his face and that is more gratifying to him than anything else in the world. While he's accomplished a lot, he's obsessed about that image just about as much as Antonio Tarver fantasized about Roy Jones unconscious.

(Speaking of Tarver, that dude is so far gone, I think he "knows" his wife while fantasizing about throwing an overhand left with his eyes closed. At the VERY LEAST, dude has a tape of the RJ KO playing on repeat in the background. I'm certain of it.)

I'd like to see TR inquire about Ghost Guerrero, possibly buying him out for one fight for a lump sum, if the parties were willing.

That would generate some decent numbers -- strictly from the whole compare-with-Mayweather storyline, plus he's been introduced, and his pops is bat sh*t crazy -- and I'm pretty sure Pacquiao would shellack him.

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Memo got those sources brainwashed and fluzzied for/and with his bluffing and fronting. That fallen Angel is the one who's avoiding VADA as if it is a plague.

He doesn't know the precedures that Doc Maggie Goodman uses, thus he is a deer in on-coming headlights of a vehicle that is going to smash and crash dat @\$ and take away his cash for chic cheat. Holla!

Sharp eye, The Shadow! The Cali Humbug of Jesus and his wacky pops are in the running for April. And that is no April's fool. Holla!