

Final 2006 Tabulations for Pound-for-Pound Best

Written by David A. Avila

Tuesday, 26 December 2006 19:00

This is the final listing for my best fighters pound-for-pound in the world. What does it mean?

If all these fighters below weighed the same, this is the order I believe represents the very best in the sport of professional prizefighting.

After 12 months there have been various changes, including the retirement of Bernard Hopkins who reigned at the top of most pound-for-pound lists everywhere. Though he has mentioned returning to active duty I will wait until that time comes. Meanwhile there are plenty of active prizefighters deserving mention.

A few fighters have returned to the list including Oscar De La Hoya and Shane Mosley who fought their way back against elite competition. Others who were on the list a year ago have dropped out after suffering postponements or losses like Jose Luis Castillo, Diego Corrales and Antonio Tarver.

Two fighters making their debuts are Mexico's Israel Vazquez and Joan Guzman of the Dominican Republic.

Floyd Mayweather Jr. remained at number one after a year. He moved into the welterweight division and beat two of the top 147-pounders convincingly.

Here are the final top 12 boxers in the world:

1. Floyd Mayweather Jr. (37-0, 24 KOs) – Known as Pretty Boy Floyd Mayweather, he continues to prove size does not matter if you have the skills and know-how to counteract. His wins over Zab Judah and Carlos Baldomir in the welterweight division with an injury to his right hand prove he's the guy.
2. Manny Pacquiao (43-3-2, 34 KOs) – Maybe the junior lightweight doesn't have boxing skills on a par with Mayweather but he is the most exciting boxer in the world. The man he beat twice last year, Erik Morales, formerly held that title. Now Pac Man is on the move from number four last year to number two. Could Pac Man beat Mayweather? Good question. People forget Mayweather ruled this division and now rules three divisions higher. Could Pac Man beat a welterweight as Mayweather has done? I don't think so. But Pac Man is definitely the most exciting fighter today.
3. Winky Wright (51-3-1, 25 KOs) – Though he suffered a draw against Jermain Taylor, many felt he beat the middleweight champion. Last month he bludgeoned Ike Quartey and became the first opponent to make him say ow.
4. Marco Antonio Barrera (63-4, 42 KOs) – The master fighter from Mexico City is beginning to show his age. But you can't outthink Marco Antonio Barrera. He's looking for a rematch against

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Manny Pacquiao. Barrera wants to go out with a bang.

5. Rafael Marquez (36-3, 32 KOs) – The bantamweight world champion wants to move up in weight now that he's proven he's too much for the 118-pounders. Rafael Marquez combines classic boxing style with knockout power. If you make a mistake when fighting him it's all over.

6. Joe Calzaghe (42-0, 31 KOs) – Welshman Joe Calzaghe has fought professionally for 13 years and has never suffered a defeat. But it took a challenge from super middleweight Jeff Lacy to finally get recognition. Now he faces America's Peter Manfredo. No easy task.

7. Jermain Taylor (26-0-1, 17 KOs) – The Arkansas middleweight has the world title but his lackluster performance against the much smaller Kassim Ouma and the 12-round draw to Winky Wright have many doubting his talent. It's his fighting heart that keeps him undefeated.

8. James Toney (69-5-3, 43 KOs) – Lights Out Toney has erased all doubters about his presence in the heavyweight division. On Jan. 6, against Sam Peter, he gets a fourth chance to win the heavyweight title. Will this be the last hurrah for Toney?

9. Oscar De La Hoya (38-4, 30 KOs) – The Golden Boy returned to the ring after a near two year absence and beat two-time world titleholder Ricardo Mayorga to a pulp for the junior middleweight title. Few believed he could do it. Now he meets Mayweather for the pound-for-pound title on May 5, 2007 in Las Vegas.

10. Joan Guzman (27-0, 17 KOs) – As a junior featherweight Joan Guzman couldn't find anyone willing to meet him in the ring. So he moved up two weight divisions and people jumped to fight him. He promptly beat former junior lightweight world champions Javier Jauregui and Jorge Barrios. Now people are considering other paths. Guzman is for real.

11. Shane Mosley (43-4, 37 KOs) – After losing twice to Winky Wright people began to say Sugar Shane doesn't have it anymore. But two wins over Fernando Vargas convinced everyone that the Pomona speedster is back and better than ever in the welterweight division.

12. Israel Vazquez (41-3, 30 KOs) – Known as El Magnifico, Mexico City's Israel Vazquez proved it once more against fellow Mexico City fighter Jhonny Gonzalez. Their match last May gave boxing fans the best fight of the year. Vazquez could be facing yet another Mexico City fighter Rafael Marquez for the junior featherweight title. It could be another fight of the year.