

No More Jokes For Mayweather And Hitman

Written by David A. Avila

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LAS VEGAS-A recent visit to Las Vegas to see WBC welterweight titleholder Floyd Mayweather and challenger Ricky Hatton prepare for their anticipated encounter was nothing like their opening press conferences of two months ago.

It's serious now.

If fans expect the two world champions to emerge clowning and spitting out controversial dialogue to hype the fight, that's all over now.

When Mayweather and Hatton (43-0, 31 KOs) jump into the prize ring on Saturday Dec. 8 at the MGM Grand, the boxing world will see two of the best fighters pound for pound battle for riches beyond the imagination.

Whoever wins gets even richer.

Except for a certain prizefighter from East Los Angeles, few professional boxers ever achieve double digit millions for a single prizefight. Mayweather should make well past \$20 million while Hatton can probably pass \$15 million with ease depending on his pay-per-view totals in Europe.

Sorry MMA fighters, this financial bracket is beyond your dreams.

"They call me money Mayweather," said Mayweather (38-0, 24 KOs) while training inside his Las Vegas boxing gym. "If you want to make money you come see me."

Once more Mayweather seeks to pass the 1 million pay-per-view mark.

"Floyd Mayweather will be the first one to do it," said Schaefer, who calculates more ways to make money than any other promoter. "He has a good chance of doing it."

According to Schaefer's research Mayweather-Hatton should surpass 1 million pay-per-views, something that even Oscar De La Hoya never achieved.

You can blame it on Mayweather. From the first press conference the fighter considered the best boxer in the universe came blazing with taunts, brags and silliness.

It all began in Hollywood at Universal Studios back during a hot October day next to the Hard Rock Café. Mayweather was at his mocking best as he grabbed Hatton's crown from his head and proceeded to berate and insult the great British fighter.

Hatton chuckled with amusement.

About an hour later, when most of the media had slowly filtered out of the Hard Rock Café,

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Mayweather and his crew merrily marched through the iconic restaurant chanting about “smelling the blood of an Englishman” as Hatton comfortably sat in a large booth with his mates after a good meal.

Dancing with the Stars

Despite knowing he was about to face undefeated Hatton, the Las Vegas resident chose to participate on the Dancing With the Stars a reality television show. It was a daunting task considering it was a sport he was not familiar with.

“It’s no problem,” boasted Mayweather, 30, as he mixed dancing with the beautiful Karina Smirnoff and boxing with his uncle Roger Mayweather. “When you got skills like me, it’s not a problem at all.”

But despite obvious athletic abilities Mayweather and Smirnoff were eliminated by the television audience vote. Now the former junior lightweight, lightweight, junior welterweight, junior middleweight and current welterweight champion finally had time to concentrate 100 percent on the British fighter known as “The Hitman.”

Leonard Ellerbe, who advises Mayweather and works in his corner during fights, said dancing on the television reality show actually pumped up the fighter for the boxing showdown.

“Floyd loves challenges,” said Ellerbe who has watched his friend beat De La Hoya, Carlos Baldomir and Zab Judah in succession. “He doesn’t like to lose in anything. That’s just the way he is.”

Meanwhile Hatton headed straight for his gym in Manchester to prepare. There was no dancing involved.

24/7

Seeking to repeat the massive success of the De La Hoya showdown with Mayweather this past May, Golden Boy Promotions decided to finance another HBO production called Countdown to Mayweather-Hatton 24/7.

“It’s well worth the money,” said Schaefer, who gave the go-ahead to finance the weekly documentary on the fighter’s preparations in and out of the gym. “The feedback we received from this one and the shows we did with Oscar were very positive.”

De La Hoya’s fight with Mayweather shattered all previous pay-per-view numbers for a boxing match including heavyweight-boxing records with more than 2.5 million pay-per-views.

“We think we can break 1 million pay-per-views this time according to our research,” said Schaefer.

Whoever wins moves on toward another mega fight possibly with De La Hoya that will take

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place in Dodger Stadium. If not the Chavez Ravine site, then the Los Angeles Coliseum or the Rose Bowl are alternatives.

“It’s something that Oscar has said he definitely wants to do for the fans,” Schaefer said.

De La Hoya’s opponent for the fight slated in early May 2008 will probably make more than \$20 million.

Last chance

During a media workout held in Las Vegas on Wednesday Nov. 28, both fighters seemed in perfect shape and perfect health as they approach fight night.

Hatton sparred with junior welterweight prospect Rock Allen and amateur star Carl Darden to simulate Mayweather’s speed.

Allen’s father Nazeem Richardson, who also trains Bernard Hopkins, said that both Allen and Darden can’t emulate exactly Mayweather’s style or habits, but they bring youth.

“You can never emulate another boxer exactly. But both of these guys are young and the things they can do like not get hit are things an older fighter might not be able to do,” said Richardson while in the underground training center in Zuffa headquarters where Ultimate Fighting championship MMA fighters train regularly. “They both have speed and are willing to mix it up with Hatton.”

Allen, who is undefeated as a pro after 12 fights, said working with Hatton in that fighter’s Manchester gym was an experience.

“You can’t help but learn from a guy like that who brings so much pressure,” said Allen.

With his narrow slit eyes Hatton looks like a street ruffian and calmly lets everyone know that he’s not able to talk much. Training takes precedence. He expects a cat and mouse kind of affair with Mayweather.

“He’s going to try and wear me down,” says Hatton, 29, as he drips perspiration from a previous workout. “That’s what he thinks.”

Across town maybe three miles south, Mayweather’s crew are preparing for his arrival in the gym he made this year. About 25 people not including the media are waiting for the current WBC welterweight champion to step through the small door where two huge bodyguards make sure that intruders or possible threats are shooed away.

Ninety minutes later Mayweather arrives to speak briefly to the press as he gets his fragile hands wrapped and gloves put on. He’s no longer joking about his pending fight but has a concentrated look like a doctor about to perform intricate surgery.

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Ellerbe says that Mayweather has slipped into automatic. It's not a strange venture for the fighter who's experienced more than a dozen world title defenses in his career.

"You have to understand that Floyd was a world champion when Ricky Hatton was in his eighth or ninth pro fight," said Ellerbe whose straightforward responses are common. "There's nothing that Floyd has not been through already. But Ricky Hatton is going to find out what it's like."

Mayweather is about to spar with Lovemore N'Dou and Carlos Baldomir, both are pressure fighters with the latter a former world champion who actually fought Mayweather before.

"I know this kid is going to come out and bring his best," said Mayweather soberly about Hatton. "I'm working when he's asleep and then I work out again."

Ellerbe has seen this before where his charge transforms from a one-man publicity machine to a fully prepared warrior.

"He knows exactly what he has to do," Ellerbe says.

The jokes are over.