

## Mayweather? Hatton? Mosley? Sure, Says Manny

Written by Ron Borges

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LAS VEGAS – Ricky Hatton was in Las Vegas for one reason over the weekend. He was there to look at his next opponent. What he saw should not be encouraging.

Manny Pacquiao beat the life out of boxing's Golden Boy, Oscar De La Hoya, forcing him to retire on his stool after the eighth round and probably forcing him into permanent retirement. Pacquiao not only didn't lose a round, he so dominated the fight that he won one round 10-8 without benefit of a knockdown.

Hatton, like many people including the Las Vegas oddsmakers, felt the 35-year-old De La Hoya would find a way to beat down boxing's pound-for-pound champion but Pacquiao's hand speed, agility and ability to get inside, land and then escape before De La Hoya had time to react was utterly overwhelming.

In fact, Pacquiao even won the battle of the bulge. Much debate had gone on over the size of the two and what that size difference might mean. De La Hoya had not fought at the welterweight limit in over seven years while Pacquiao was only one fight removed from weighing 126 pounds and thus was really moving up three weight classes, not two.

Yet the day after they hit the scales, Pacquiao entered the ring at 148 1/2, outweighing De La Hoya by a pound and a half. Considering how Pacquiao then performed, it was clear that while his punching power lacked a little of the sting it carried at the lower weights he lost no speed and he was still way capable of doing enough damage to send his opponent to the emergency room for observation.

What Hatton must have been thinking as the fight unfolded in decidedly one-sided fashion no one knows because he left the arena before De La Hoya, off to have a pint and contemplate just how he will cope with Pacquiao's speed and aggressiveness if he's matched with him next spring or summer.

Yet there remains no guarantee the two will meet next even though Pacquiao seemed more than happy to consider it.

"I can fight him no problem," Pacquiao (48-3-2, 35 KO) said. "Anywhere they want, if the price is right."

It very likely will be because Hatton can all but guarantee a huge gate with as many as 100,000 people packing London's Wembley Stadium or 55,000 or more if the fight is staged in his hometown of Manchester, England. HBO's suits may fight the notion of taking the fight to Great Britain because of the logistical problems in broadcasting a live event at 3 a.m. British time (so it can be televised in prime time in the U.S.) but if the number is right everything else will be as well.

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Yet those logistical problems, as well as the fact that the idea of matching De La Hoya and Pacquiao was never to create a Hatton-Pacquiao showdown at 140 pounds but rather a Hatton-De La Hoya match at 147, are not the most significant issues that will determine what Pacquiao does next.

Obviously, selling a De La Hoya-Hatton match is impossible now after the beat down he took and he conceded to Roach immediately after the fight was stopped that "You were right. I don't have it any more." So while Hatton waits to see what is next for him, Pacquiao and Roach must consider a host of possibilities, including possibly offering Juan Manuel Marquez a lucrative third match in their ongoing struggle at 140 pounds, give or take a few pounds.

Marquez has moved up in weight and would prefer fighting Pacquiao for the lightweight title Pacquiao won in his last fight (and first one at 135 pounds) but now that Pacquiao has experienced how much easier life is when he only has to get down to 140 pounds (he was 142 at the weigh in for De La Hoya) he might refuse to defend the WBC title he won at the expense of David Diaz earlier this year, especially against Marquez, with whom he has fought no better than dead even through 24 rounds and two fights.

What he won't be doing next seems clearer at this early juncture than what he will be doing next, beyond the obvious long vacation after a grueling two month training camp at Roach's Wildcard Gym in Hollywood.

"We're not going to fight (unified welterweight champion Antonio) Margarito," Roach said flatly when his name was brought up. "We would fight (Shane) Mosley if he beats Margarito but we know our limitations. There are a lot of fights for Manny at 140 but a young Margarito? No."

There have already been some rumblings that former pound-for-pound champion Floyd Mayweather, Jr. may be back in boxing next year and he is someone Pacquiao might consider even though Mayweather would be considered the best fighter in boxing if he was active at the moment.

The former welterweight champion retired after winning a far more difficult split decision against De La Hoya a year ago so one could easily see a showdown with Pacquiao transformed into a major pay-per-view attraction.

Roach and Pacquiao would have no problem with that. Their only problem would be at what weight the two men would fight.

"We wouldn't fight Mayweather (if he opts to come out of retirement) at 147," Roach said. "We might be willing to do it at a catch weight (somewhere between 140 and 147) but not at 147."

So is Pacquiao abandoning the welterweight division he just moved into after winning the lightweight title in his last fight for the leaner world of 140? It would seem that way because despite his dominance of De La Hoya, Roach knows his fighter better than anyone and fully understands he is not a true 147 pounder. In fact, he was barely above the junior welterweight limit when he weighed in last Friday afternoon and his power did not carry up to that division as

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fully as Roach would have liked.

This is no surprise. It is what happens to almost every fighter as they move up in weight, whether it's Roberto Duran leaving the lightweight division behind to De La Hoya moving up from welterweight to most anyone you can think of.

Not only does the smaller man lose power but he's also hitting bigger, more resilient opponents and so they stand up under the pounding, as De La Hoya's legs did even though his face did not.

"Manny can make 140 with his eyes closed," Roach said, implying that perhaps that is now the division where he will end up, which brings us, and more importantly Pacquiao, back to Ricky Hatton.

As Roach discussed the future for his fighter into the wee hours of Sunday morning, Oscar De La Hoya was sitting somewhere in the dark and in a similar situation – with his future in doubt and his eye closed.