

Manny Is The New Floyd

Written by Dan Horgan

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As former pound-for-pound kingpin and four-division champion Floyd Mayweather Jr. leisurely spends the tens of millions of dollars he made in his 11-year fight career that ended when he retired just over a year ago, Filipino storm Manny Pacquiao has taken Mayweather's place as boxing's top fighter – and begun diminishing Mayweather's legacy by outdoing the Grand Rapids native's late-career success.

On December 6, Pacquiao, moving up twelve pounds in weight, met superstar Oscar De La Hoya in a welterweight fight that brought boxing back into the mainstream spotlight. A fight fan couldn't turn on the T.V. or pick up anything resembling a men's magazine without seeing pre-bout coverage or advertising, and HBO's acclaimed series 24/7, which documents fighters' lives and training camps prior to HBO Pay-Per-View bouts, received more exposure than ever through YouTube, where the first episode received over 1.5-million views.

Over seven one-sided rounds, Pacquiao embarrassed De La Hoya with quicker, stronger hands and a skill set that made what should have been a competitive prizefight seem like a sparring session. Many expected De La Hoya, who has fought the past eleven years between welterweight and middleweight, to overpower Pacquiao, who began his career at a meek 106 pounds. But Pacquiao blew De La Hoya away, sending the nine-time champ into probable retirement.

For De La Hoya, the Pacquiao loss must have been a cruel *déjà vu* experience, as just 19 months earlier, he was also beaten on boxing's biggest stage against the sport's pound-for-pound best (at the time, Mayweather Jr.). What could have been a career-defining victory for "The Golden Boy" turned into another embarrassing defeat, and the 35 year old was again forced to tip his cap and admit that his rival was, at least for one night, a better fighter.

But for Mayweather Jr., De La Hoya's loss to Pacquiao could be even more damaging.

When Mayweather outpointed De La Hoya via split decision, he got what many experts believed to be one of his career-best victories. He was, after all, fighting a much bigger man who had won belts in several divisions and was coming off of a dynamic sixth-round knockout over the dangerous Ricardo Mayorga.

But after Pacquiao's emphatic thumping of Oscar, Mayweather's narrow win over De La Hoya not only seems less impressive but almost embarrassing for Mayweather. Considering De La Hoya's past-prime state, which Pacquiao exploited easily, Mayweather in hindsight should have disposed of his foe with ease in their 150-pound meeting. But he instead struggled to eke out a victory, which makes one wonder if Mayweather really was the dominant force he was perceived to be towards the end of his career.

We'll get a better gauge of Mayweather's supremacy when Pacquiao squares off against Ricky Hatton in May. Hatton was Mayweather's final victim – he fell to Floyd via tenth-round TKO in a

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semi-competitive fight – and should Pacquiao blow away the rugged Brit, he will again one-up Mayweather, and diminish the latter's legacy.

The only way Mayweather can thwart the damage Pacquiao is doing to his name is to come out of retirement and fight him. Let's just hope he's not too busy spending money to consider fighting the man who has taken his place within the sport.