

## Pacquiao-Hatton Is On, 99.9% On

Written by Michael Woods  
Monday, 05 January 2009 19:00

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It's 99.9% done. Manny Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton will throw down on May 2nd, in Las Vegas, with only the venue yet to be determined.

Expect the building to be chosen in the next day or so, as Pacquiao's promoter Bob Arum and Hatton's rep, Richard Schaefer of Golden Boy are hashing out venue details today.

Ricky Hatton had tried to give himself a hometown boost, politicking to hold the scrap in England. That location had more than a bit of merit to it, as the thought of jamming 50,000 rabid Hatton boosters into Wembley Stadium makes sense from a gate revenue perspective. But the time difference—England is five hours ahead of us on the East Coast—throws a hitch into that plan. Starting the main event at 4 AM is not fair to the punters who paid good money to see their man Hatton try and derail the Pacquiao P4P Express.

The Thomas and Mack Center or MGM Grand are believed to be the two arenas in the mix to stage the signature fight for the first half of 2009. The 30-year old Pacquiao (48-3-2) will enter the bout as the favorite, on the strength of his nine fight win streak, and the buzz that remains from his conclusive takedown of Oscar De La Hoya. Hatton (45-1), also 30, is enjoying a bit of a career boost, as he looked sharp and strong in battering Paulie Malignaggi in November. Under the gaze of new trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr., fight fans think the old dog may be learning some new tricks at this late stage of his career, and will provide a stern test for Pacquiao. The bout will take place at the 140 pound class, Hatton's best division. Pacquiao last fought in a welterweight scrap with Oscar, but weighed 142 pounds at weigh in, so he was basically a junior welter on that night.

Most pundits expect, with the aid of hindsight, that Hatton will provide a much more grueling, physical hurdle than Oscar, who by all accounts was sapped by caloric deprivation. Will Pacquiao be able to employ his Coach Roach style, now perfected, against Hatton, who will look to mug and maul the Filipino more than any rival in recent memory? Will Manny be thrown off not fighting someone of Mexican descent? After ten straight bouts against Mexicans or Mexican Americans, will Pacquiao, not wearing his Mexicutioner cape, be able to function with the same efficiency?

Weigh in, TSS Univserse, on Pacquiao-Hatton. And may I be the first to go out on a limb, and refer to the bout as Pacquiao-Hatton I? I expect a war, a bloody, harsh war of attrition, with the winner eking out the nod by no more than a point or two on the cards. A sequel, I say, is a given.