

Some Bloody Truth, TSS Style

Written by Ron Borges

Monday, 21 December 2009 18:00

There are more than a few things that could yet stop the much-anticipated fight between Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and Manny Pacquiao but despite the headlines of the moment, blood won't be one of them. Blood, after all, is what boxing is all about.

Normally the issue is the spilling of blood. Spill too much and you lose. Don't spill enough of the other guy's and you lose. Get it in your eye, you may lose. Get it in the other guy's eye – sneak attack! It's bloody important the matter of blood in boxing, but Tuesday the issue became bloody awful when Mayweather's promoter, Oscar De La Hoya, was informed by Pacquiao's promoter, Bob Arum, that the pound-for-pound champion was refusing to agree to a blood test 30 days before what is expected to be a March 13 showdown between the two fighters that could produce the largest live gate and biggest pay-per-view audience in boxing history.

According to Golden Boy Promotions, who have represented Mayweather throughout the lengthy and on-going negotiations with Arum's company, Pacquiao is refusing to submit to Olympic style drug testing as mandated by the United States Anti-Doping Agency. Mayweather's representatives want to be assured Pacquiao, who began his career as a 106-pound fighter but now is overwhelming men as big as 147-pound champion Miguel Cotto and former middleweight belt holder De La Hoya, is not using performance enhancing drugs.

Frankly, it's not an unreasonable request but then again neither was Pacquiao's alleged counter proposal that he have his blood tested only before the first press conference that begins the promotion and again after the fight. Doping experts might argue that Pacquiao could be able to have a masking agent in his system by then that would hide any possible use of performance enhancing drugs but unless the two were going to agree to random testing at any time leading up to the fight, which neither are likely to do, what's the difference because if he knows roughly when the "random" test is coming would he not be just as prepared to mask anything he was taking?

Richard Schaefer, Golden Boy's CEO, said Pacquiao's refusal has put in jeopardy a fight that is being looked upon as likely to break the live gate record of \$18,419,200 and the all-time pay-per-view sales record of 2.44 million, both set two years ago when Mayweather defeated De La Hoya at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. If you truly believe a dispute over when a blood test will be taken is going to keep that kind of money out of the bank accounts of Mayweather and Pacquiao well, you are a very naïve person.

Mayweather has been playing psychological warfare with Pacquiao from the outset, constantly mentioning that while he doesn't know what the bitter taste of defeat is, Pacquiao does. That is a regularly reminder to Pacquiao that while to this point Mayweather has been unbeatable, the pound-for-pound champion has not.

This latest insistence on blood testing for performance enhancing drugs 30 days before the fight seems only another way to rub Pacquiao the wrong way and try to win the fight before the

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fight – the psychological one that is often as important as the boxing match itself.

Although nothing is signed or finalized, Schaefer claimed Tuesday that most major points had been agreed to until he was informed by Todd duBoef, president of Top Rank, that Pacquiao was not willing to be tested so close to the fight. This led to a blitz of press releases designed, frankly, to call Pacquiao's willingness to fight or competitive honesty into question.

"Team Mayweather is certainly surprised that an elite athlete like Manny Pacquiao would refuse drug testing procedures which Floyd has already agreed to and have been agreed to by many other top athletes such as Lance Armstrong and Olympians Michael Phelps, LeBron James and Kobe Bryant," Schaefer said in a prepared statement.

Mayweather then ramped up the pressure on Pacquiao in a companion statement saying, "I understand Pacquiao not liking his blood taken, because frankly I don't know anyone who really does but in a fight of this magnitude I think it is our responsibility to subject ourselves to sportsmanship at the highest level.

"I've already agreed to the testing and it is a shame that he is not willing to do the same. It leaves me with great doubt as to the level of fairness I would be facing in the ring that night."

Mayweather went on to say he "hoped" Pacquiao would change his mind and his long-time advisor and confidante, Leonard Ellerbee, hinted that a continued refusal could jeopardize the most lucrative fight in boxing history.

"...it is an egregious act to deny the testing and hence, deny the millions of fans the right to see this amazing fight," Ellerbee said. "We just want to make sure there is a level playing field in a sport that is a man-to-man contest that relies on strength and ability."

Fair enough and far from unreasonable, but if Pacquiao agrees to pre-and-post fight blood testing for PEDs, which it seems he already has, the likelihood that this bout will not happen because of a 30-day blood test not being in effect is well, RIDICULOUS. By their own admittance, Pacquiao has already agreed to having blood drawn before and after the fight, which is more than the Nevada State Athletic Commission demands. The NSAC only tests urine and does not do more sophisticated tests for human growth hormone.

A week ago Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, said his fighter would take any blood test they wanted. He feels Mayweather is fearful of Pacquiao's power and the insistence on drawing blood so close to the fight indicates their concern. Perhaps so or perhaps this is just another mind game designed to create drama where no additional tension is needed, but regardless, if this fight were stopped before anyone is bleeding it will make boxing the biggest laughingstock in sports.

It would also be another in a long line of signs that the people who run it are hellbent on marginalizing it even more than it already is. The fact of the matter is these two fighters need each other because they'd have to fight three or four times to earn what each will be paid in one night. If the sport really wants to get back into the consciousness of the general sports fan

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boxing needs them to fight too and that's the bloody truth.

So there may be continued discussion of this issue and other issues for some time; but in the end, Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and Manny Pacquiao will fight, because while blood may be thicker than water, it is not thicker than cash.