

To Vegas and Back, For Pacquiao-Bradley

Written by David A. Avila
Monday, 18 June 2012 09:46



photo by Katharine Rodriguez

The drive to Las Vegas from Riverside takes about three hours and if you have the right company or the right music it seems even shorter.

The June 9th mega fight between Timothy “Desert Storm” Bradley and Manny “Pacman” Pacquiao was motivation enough to attract large crowds to the casino capital but the annual Electric Daisy Carnival event bumped up the town 10 times more than usual.

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Las Vegas was packed with teens and 20-something year olds roaming all over the desert city. Every single restaurant, every single casino and every street near the Las Vegas Strip was stacked and filled with carloads of youth driving up and down with written markings on their car windows like "EDC forever."

I hadn't seen Vegas this crowded since Ricky Hatton and his British followers hit the town back in December 2007. That was some bash too. The Brits drank Vegas dry and beer was hard to find. They were literally sleeping in the bar lounges of the MGM and nearby casinos.

By Thursday, the EDCers had arrived and were antsy for their party to begin. The boxing crowd would not begin arriving until Friday, yet, Vegas was already feeling the crunch of people. That was a good thing.

Usually it takes me a day to get things settled and arriving on a Thursday allows me to visit the local gyms in the area. This time however I arrived too late and only had time to do some writing.

Friday

Friday morning I woke up around 7 a.m. grabbed some coffee and checked out the schedules for the boxing events. Later, Kelly Pavlik would be fighting at the Hard Rock Hotel Casino along with several other Top Rank prospects.

My co-worker Katherine Rodriguez arrived the previous day and I picked her up around noon so we could visit Floyd Mayweather's gym. She now writes for UpperCutMagazine.com and for *La Prensa* newspaper. Very few people know boxing as well as she does. Her brother would be fighting later on Friday night. Katherine is a former boxer who once fought current US Olympian Marlen Esparza and placed third in the U.S. as a junior flyweight in 2008. She knows boxing.

We were hoping to meet Costa Rica's Bryan Vazquez who is ranked number one in the world as a junior lightweight. When we arrived we saw several boxers but the only one we recognize is Celestino Caballero who currently holds the WBA featherweight world title.

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Caballero is a funny guy. The nearly six-foot tall Panamanian is going to be 36 next week but looks more like 23. It's probably his humor that keeps him looking young. He will be defending the WBA title against Riverside's Mikey Garcia.

He's a chatty guy who doesn't mind working out while talking. He expects to beat Garcia because he feels that the former Oxnard prizefighter is not as strong as himself. The fight was supposed to take place in July at Fantasy Springs Casino but it's postponed and reset for Sept. 7 in Las Vegas. Expect an explosive title fight.

We leave after 30 minutes and head back to the Hard Rock where we meet Las Vegas boxing trainer James Pena. He works with Melinda Cooper who many consider one of the top female prizefighters pound for pound. We discuss women's boxing and also talk about some of the events scheduled later in the evening and on Saturday's big fight card. Everybody agrees that Timothy Bradley has a good shot at beating Pacman. While we're sitting at the table eating, at a table nearby two girls in bikinis are enjoying their drinks and meals too. One of the girls facing us has her top literally pop off. Everybody feigns shock and laughs. She laughs too and apologizes for the eruption. We cover our eyes in mock terror and laugh some more.

After lunch I head toward the arena called the Joint to grab my press credential. Katherine heads back to her room to change. While getting my credential I notice that the Hard Rock is super packed. I expect the arena to be filled considering the amount of people milling around.

I arrived early because scheduled to fight in the first bout is Riverside prospect Saul "Dinamita" Rodriguez. So far he's knocked out all four opponents and none survived into minute two of round one. On this day he'll face a kid who is taller and just as sturdy. They battle toe-to-toe evenly but it's evident that Rodriguez has the better skills and better power. The other kid, Kevin Davila, backs off and resorts to different measures. Nothing really works and Rodriguez out-hits his opponent all four rounds. His work to the body tells the story. Those punches sound like they're coming from a middleweight. Rodriguez is only 19 so I can imagine how much harder he's going to hit in a few years. He's being taught the finer points of boxing by Eduardo Garcia who taught both Fernando Vargas and Robert Garcia everything they know. He also trains Mikey Garcia in Riverside. Don Garcia is one of the best trainers in the world but few know this. He doesn't work the corner during his son Mikey's fights or during Saul Rodriguez's fights. Instead it is Robert Garcia who works the corner though he doesn't really train them. But he knows their tendencies and what they can do. The system works for them.

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Another boxer performing that night was local hero Jesse Magdaleno. I had seen him fight a few times over the past few years but didn't really take note of him. Not until I saw him fight on a boxing card in Pomona did I notice the improvement. He was sharper and more accurate, plus he was setting up opponents rather than overwhelming them. Against a kid named Nick Fast he was pinpoint and impressive. That fight prompted me to watch him again and against Puerto Rico's Carlos Valcarcel he proved to be just as impressive again in a junior featherweight contest. Magdaleno ended the former Olympian's night in 2:25 of the first round. He's becoming a polished prospect.

Notre Dame football player Mike Lee fought on the card too against Mexico's Eliseo Durazo. Lee has been refining his skills and has a good trainer in Ronnie Shields. The Mexican fighter Durazo has experience and used it in preventing Lee from overwhelming him throughout the fight. Lee won nearly every round and ended the fight with a barrage of punches. It was a little dangerous but he has the chin to take gambles like that every so often. His crowd arrived for the fight in force as usual and gave him great support.

The main event was Kelly Pavlik against Scott Sigmon in a super middleweight match. Pavlik has been training in Oxnard under Robert Garcia. It's a good fit for the former middleweight champion and against Sigmon he was too powerful and too polished. Sigmon took a large amount of punishment. In my estimation, the fight should have been stopped around the fifth round. I've seen many fights in my experience including a dozen boxers die from punishment endured in the boxing ring. This was one of those moments where a fighter was just too tough for his own good. Pavlik was hitting the kid to the body and head with blows that would kill a steer. Sigmon took them all and returned very little. Finally the fight was stopped in round seven. Thankfully, the kid from Virginia was not hurt too bad.

After the long fight card I returned to my hotel to get some rest. Saturday would be a long day and every moment of rest is important.

Saturday

Early Saturday I had to check out and gather my stuff. There were breakfast press conferences planned for WBA champ Gennady Golovkin who is set to fight WBO champ Dmitry Pirog in a battle of undefeated middleweight world titleholders on August 25. I can't make the press

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conference but I hope to make their fight if its held in the West Coast. Golovkin is training in Big Bear mountain and that's about an hour away from Riverside. I'll be visiting him.

By the time I check out of my hotel, pick up fellow writer Katherine Rodriguez, grab my credential and a few other things it's noon. We race to one of the breakfast press conferences where Andre Ward and Chad Dawson talk about their September date in Oakland. We catch about 15 minutes of the talking.

It's about 1:30 so we head toward the media center tent outside of the arena. Photographer Al Applerose who works with me and Katherine is already inside. He rode in with German Villasenor who shoots for Maxboxing.com. We all chat a bit about the fights from the previous night and what to expect from the big fight card.

The first bout begins around 3:15 and I go inside the arena that sits more than 16,000 and hear the introduction music to one of the fighters. There are probably only a few hundred people sitting at the moment. The first fight begins and ends very quickly.

Everyone knows what happened in the fights including the eruption of controversy regarding the decision in favor of Timothy Bradley. I'm tired of arguing about it especially when it really doesn't matter any more. All I can say is that I felt it was a much closer fight than most people. Lots and lots of missed blows. Judge Jerry Roth is one of the best in the world and he had it a close fight in favor of Manny Pacquiao. He had it close and I agree it was close, but I think Bradley fought all three minutes of every round and Pacquiao only one minute of each round and paid for it. Bradley absolutely won more than a single round. Round two was definitely his as he battered Pacquiao with nearly a dozen blows while in a clinch. Whoever didn't score that round for Bradley is definitely wrong. Another thing is CompuBox. They had Bradley with 21 connects in round nine. I easily counted 40 for Bradley in that round. Nobody is perfect, but using CompuBox for an argument is not scientific proof. It's approximate proof.

After I posted my story I had many people tell me I don't know what I'm talking about. Au contraire. I see more than 400 fights a year and I doubt if there are more than a dozen people in the world including judges that see that many fights live. The HBO crew definitely does not. I can tell you which judges like busy fighters, which like defense and which like actual scoring blows. I've seen them all judge fights for the past 20 years. Roth is one of the best. Roth, Pat Russell, and Max DeLuca are the three best judges in the world. They're very consistent. Russell is absolutely the best referee in the world aside from being one of the best judges.

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There are several others including about three more from Nevada.

During the post fight press conference there were thousands of people milling around. I saw reporters from Mexico, United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Philippines and from all over the U.S. One thing that always happens is whenever there is a decision in a big fight someone is going to get angry. Everyone thinks they're correct.

All you hear is people crying and moaning "that's what's wrong about boxing." It's all become a cliché. Boxing has been this way for more than 100 years. The only time there is near satisfaction is a victory by knockout. MMA is the same thing. Knockouts and submissions are what only satisfy MMA fans too.

That's just the way prizefighting is. A lot of people argue that it should be like basketball or soccer where there is a definite winner. Of course that would be great, but it's impossible to do at the moment. Besides, NBA and soccer are filled with cheating. Every time you see a player flop that's really cheating. Every time you see a guy double dribble or carry the ball that's cheating. Soccer is horrible with its guys feigning injury near the goal so that they can get a free kick. Whenever I see a seven-foot NBA giant fall down when somebody touches him it makes me wince. I saw Derek Fisher just graze a center and he flopped as if he was hit by a Mack truck. It's ridiculous. I can't watch it. It's become a sissy sport. So has soccer.

Well enough of that. I feel better now.

After about 45 minutes Katherine Rodriguez and her family joined me on the ride home around midnight. Three hours later we were back in Riverside. The roads were rather clear without the EDC minions riding about.

[Comment on this article](#)

deepwater says:

mike lee should be ashamed. he has no skill. he is a gimmick. a can with notre dame credentials. the pirog fight is the real deal. pirog whooped golden child danny whatever. mike lee would get knocked out at gleasons by any open class amatuer with 16 oz gloves on.

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Radam G says:

Nice journal. Holla!

brownsugar says:

I love the more measured and considered articles that come out weeks after the event. So what about the conspiracy?

TotoyBato says:

Bradley did not fight entire minutes of each round, he kept running away and flailed ineffectively whenever Pacquiao decided to attack. I've never seen somebody with a broken ankle move so fast. Bradley did defend so well because that was all he was working on, just defense. Effective aggression, clean punching, ring generalship three traits that Bradley did not have. Amateurish ineffective shots should not count, this is PROFESSIONAL BOXING. The judges were WRONG, they succumbed to their prejudices, lost their focus and forgot the fundamentals. They were judging Pacquiao not the fight. They (judges) were not being professionals. We all should stop rationalizing and accept it like it is. NSAC et al spit on our plate mid-way though our delicious meal. They always did and we always finish the plate and come back for seconds.

jzzy says:

You don't take the title from a champion by eating heavy punches, back pedaling and landing punches that make him smile. Bradley was game but Pacman was on another level.