

Pacquiao-Rios 24/7 Episode 1 Recap

Written by Michael Woods

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The day for answers is almost upon us. We shall see on Nov. 23 what Manny Pacquiao has left, if he can summon the "old" Manny, the guy who boasted a superlative package of hand speed, and accuracy and mobility, and down Brandon Rios...or if "old" Manny has become Old Manny, a shell of his former superstar self who became compromised by age and, perhaps, lingering damage from the December 2012 KO at the hands of nemesis for the ages Juan Manuel Marquez.

"One of the most vicious finishers in the sport," we heard Jim Lampley say in a clip from Pacman's definitive handling of Ricky Hatton in 2009 in episode one of HBO's Pacquiao-Rios 24/7 series. We saw a clip sure to turn the stomachs of Manny-iacs, of Manny being taken away in an ambulance post KO loss, and were soothed by the narration of the pound for pound narration king, Liev Schrieber.

Pacman's publicity trip to Macau is spotlighted. Rios admits to being "very nervous" about public speaking, but says he's not nervous about the fight. The Marquez loss is then delved into. Trainer Freddie Roach said he wanted Manny to finish the controversy, and KO Marquez. Promoter Bob Arum said that Manny wanted a KO, badly. The fight is recapped, and Manny is seen having good luck in the first two rounds. Then Manny gets dropped, from a looping right, in the third. "A blind guy could see that shot coming," Roach noted. (That clip reminded me that I think anyone dismissing Rios as a B- grade steppingstone should note that Marquez connect indicates that Manny's reflexes have dropped a notch, and Rios could well take advantage of it.)

Manny got back on track, and put Marquez down. Roach thought the end was near, with Marquez wobbling in round five. Marquez "got saved by the bell," he said. Marquez was being whacked around in the sixth, but then delivered the gamechanger right hand. We saw Manny face planted, legs twitching. Arum said he went right to Jinkee, who he knew would be disturbed. Advisor Michael Koncz said he didn't know if Manny would get up.

Back in the Philippines, Manny was welcomed by stunned fans. Jinkee said she asked him to retire but he refused. She said she will support his decision. A month after the fight, he was put through neuro tests, and passed.

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Jinkee said they sometimes joke about the KO. Manny said you can't win them all, and that's why he's able to joke about it. He's 35 on Dec. 17, so we wonder if his best days are far in the rearview mirror. Manny said there is pressure but he's inspired. But he's "not done yet," he asserted. Max Kellerman said that he thinks the KO loss will quite likely leave a mark on Manny. Manny said that he isn't running scared, isn't thinking negatively.

Freddie said he won't chance Manny getting hurt, and he is his best friend. The trainer said he thinks Manny should blast out Rios. Rios, we then see, watched Chinese prospect Zou Shiming in action, ringside. "It was a paid vacation," he said of his publicity trip to China. The media tour, a long slog, was something to behold for Rios, who came up humble. Promoter Arum said the tour has helped Rios' poise and will help him deal with the big stage jitters.

In NYC, Rios walked around the NYC streets, his first time. He saw Central Park, Times Square, and dug the experience. Trainer Robert Garcia said Rios is fun to be around, but is a really hard worker in the gym.

Rios says he "hates the emeffer I'm fighting" and calls himself an "animal." Garcia said Rios "enjoys getting hit." Kellerman said he likes being in a tradefest. "He's kind of demented that way," he said. Rios said boxing is like his "rehab" and it calms him down. He said boxing is "better than sex" and "like my orgasm." Not sure how that will fly with the missus back home lol. Then we saw clips of Rios' win over Mike Alvarado, and the ref stepping in to halt it. That was like an orgasm, he reiterated.

Rios expected to get the Pacquiao-Marquez winner, and his jaw dropped when Manny dropped. He didn't get that megabout right away, so he rematched with Alvarado. Garcia said Rios thought he'd get a quickish KO. Rios was overconfident, he admitted. "I'll never do it again," he said. His first loss, he said, hit him hard. He thought his big fight would go out the window. He went home, and sulked, figuring his window of opportunity closed. But the window opened, when Arum put Rios on the short list to meet Manny. "Brandon Rio is the closest thing to Arturo Gatti I've seen around," said Arum, in a remark sure to provoke debate.

Kellerman said Rios has the ability to win, and Garcia said Rios is younger, and has immense desire. "I love pressure," Rios said. "I'm going to win."

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Pacman said he wants to give the fans a great win, but Rios thinks he's not a pushover, a steppingstone for Pacquiao to get back on top. In two weeks, we shall see who's right, and who's wrong, on Nov. 23, in Macau, and on HBO pay-per-view.

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