

Freddie Roach: "I Look Forward To A Big Year"

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 08 January 2014 00:00



Freddie Roach is used to the rollercoaster life of boxing. He's been the whiz kid boxer on the way up, and the steppingstone pug bumping his butt as he slides down the ladder. He's been named trainer of the year five times by the BWAA, but was deemed old news, past his prime, after his top client was dropped and stopped in December 2012, as whispers about his Parkinson's symptoms grew bolder. Human beings are, despite those opposable thumbs and ability to act semi civilized, animals, and the jackals gathered and tried to get a bite of Roach's hide when they sensed he was limping. But in a phone chat today, the 53-year-old sounded in fine form, in good spirits and optimistic that 2014 will be another one of those standout sessions.

"2012 wasn't the greatest year for us but last year, we had three big wins on HBO (with Pacquiao, Ruslan Provodnikov and Miguel Cotto getting solid Ws while Freddie watched from the corner and offered wisdom), "and most important was how they won," the tutor told me. "Manny looked great, and we're back in contention for the best camp out there. I was happy with the results and looking forward to a big year."

I asked if he'd ever gotten down on himself, after the jackals convened after Manny was kayoed, or after he and Amir Khan parted ways, with Khan proclaiming worry that Freddy's health worried him. "Losing is a part of the sport," he told me, "and I understand I can't win them all. I was on the mitts, and I asked my mom, 'Hey ma, do I look shot?' and she said, 'You

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haven't lost a step,' and she'd be the first to tell me I had. I didn't get down, I kept going. People thought I wasn't motivated anymore, but when Cotto came in to camp with me, and saw how hard I worked, it got him. Like Manny said, losing is part of the sport."

Roach had to get past another hurdle with the fallout from that fracas in Macau, the one which featured Alex Ariza, a former colleague, kicking him in the chest after the two exchanged harsh unpleasantries. Roach still wonders if he was set up, because of how it went down, and he told me he even went as so far as to ask around if the brouhaha was put together by people looking to get some buzz added to the mix. No, he was told. But it is clear he hasn't forgiven Ariza for his mocking of Roach's Parkinson's symptoms. "It was disgraceful," the Massachusetts native told me. "He showed his class. He's a bad person, I'm so happy he's not with us anymore. It's just a matter of time before he gets fired by Robert Garcia. The best part of that whole thing was winning the fight, and that's the only thing that really counts." [I chatted with Ariza a few weeks ago](#), after the internet was ablaze with suspicion that he aided client Marcos Maidana with some sort of between rounds chemical pick-me-up during Maidana's win over Adrien Broner. I asked him how he'd fare against Roach in a fight, and he chuckled, and basically played it off. I asked Roach the same question. "He's not worth a street fight, he would sue me, no doubt," Roach said. "But with my experience in boxing, I'd win for sure. With his MMA, it's not too good. He hit me with the girliest kick ever."

Roach recounted that he was worried, right after the incident, how Manny would react. They were doing pad work, and nobody broached the subject. At the end of the session, Pacquiao lifted his leg, as if to kick Roach a la Ariza. Pacman grinned and, Freddie said, he was relieved to know the event hadn't taken Manny off course. [Check out some more of what Roach had to say](#) during our chat here.