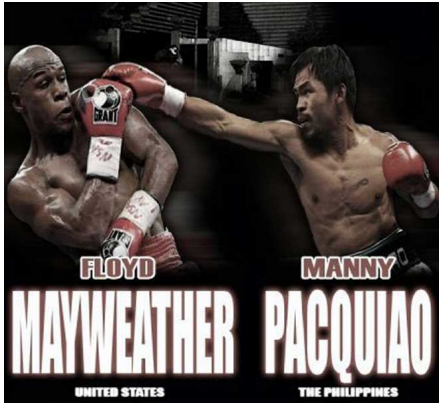


Mayweather and Pacquiao vs. the Modern 135-Pound Greats: Part One

Written by Thomas Hauser
Wednesday, 19 February 2014 17:09



Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao are scheduled to enter the ring again this spring. When that happens, historical comparisons will fill the air.

Last year, TheSweetScience.com posted the results of a poll in which industry experts predicted the outcome of a fantasy round-robin tournament at 147 pounds. Mayweather and Pacquiao were among the participants. The runaway winner was Sugar Ray Robinson. Ray Leonard finished in second place.

Since then, numerous readers have asked how the experts think Mayweather and Pacquiao would have fared against the lightweight greats.

The answer follows.

The eight fighters chosen for the 135-pound fantasy round-robin tournament in alphabetical order are: Julio Cesar Chavez, Roberto Duran, Juan Manuel Marquez, Floyd Mayweather, Shane Mosley, Carlos Ortiz, Manny Pacquiao, and Pernell Whitaker.

Legendary greats Joe Gans, Benny Leonard, Tony Canzoneri, and Henry Armstrong weren't included because there's not enough available film footage to properly evaluate them. Ike Williams was also a bit before the cut-off date.

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Issues such as same-day weigh-ins versus day-before weigh-ins might be considered by purists. And there's a difference between going twelve rounds as opposed to fifteen. But at the end of the day, either a fighter is very good, great, or the greatest.

All of the fighters chosen for the tournament also fought at one time or another at weights other than 135 pounds. The electors were asked to assume for purposes of their predictions that each fighter is duplicating his best 135-pound performance.

Twenty-six experts participated in the rankings process. Listed alphabetically, the panelists are:

Trainers: Teddy Atlas, Pat Burns, Naazim Richardson, and Don Turner

Media: Al Bernstein, Steve Farhood, Harold Lederman, Paulie Malignaggi, Dan Rafael, and Michael Rosenthal

Matchmakers: Eric Bottjer, Don Elbaum, Bobby Goodman, Brad Goodman, Ron Katz, Mike Marchionte, Chris Middendorf, Russell Peltz, and Bruce Trampler

Historians: Craig Hamilton, Don McRae, Bob Mee, Clay Moyle, Adam Pollack, Randy Roberts, and Mike Tyson

That's right! Mike Tyson. Mike is a serious historian when it comes to boxing. His input was very much valued.

If each of the eight fighters listed above had fought the other seven, there would have been 28 fights. And there were 26 panelists. Thus, 728 fights were entered in the data base.

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Fighters were awarded one point for each predicted win and a half-point for each predicted draw (too close to call).

A perfect score (each voter predicting that the same fighter would win every one of his fights) would have been 182 points.

“Styles make fights,” one elector cautioned. “But it’s more than that. You don’t know for sure how these guys would have fought each other and what adjustments they would have made during the course of each fight.”

That said; the results have been tabulated. The rankings are:

Roberto Duran 164.5 points

Pernell Whitaker 133.5

Floyd Mayweather 122.0

Julio Cesar Chavez 102.5

Shane Mosley 71.0

Carlos Ortiz 53.5

Manny Pacquiao 48.5

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Juan Manuel Marquez 32.5

PART TWO, analyzing the underlying data, will be posted tomorrow.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by e-mail at thouser@rcn.com . His most recent book (*Straight Writes and Jabs: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

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brownsugar says:

Duran was a monster ... Watching him fight DeJesus the come back and flatten him in the rematch are probably the most exciting fights at lightweight that I've had the privilege to watch.

the Roast says:

You could imagine a prime Julio Ceasar Chavez beating everyone on this list, except for Duran but that would have been one hell of a fight. Alot of blood. You never know. Sweet Pea or Floyd may have boxed those boxer/sluggers ears off OR they may have got caught, roughed up and hurt bad. Thats why it's fantasy.

deepwater2 says:

I got Ortiz ,Duran ,Benny Leonard ,Barney Ross ,Edwin Valero beating both. And Chavez sr also.

jzzy says:

I wouldn't put Mayweather in the top five, he hasn't fought enough and his competition was suspect. I have no dispute with the other four. I would've had some of the old timers from 6 thru 10, simply because of their productivity and longevity, Benny Leonard and Armstrong for sure. In this PPV era, the modern fighters do not fight enough, and their skills suffer for it.

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MisterLee says:

I'd actually put Mosley's speed and chin second to Duran who has more boxing skills than him. I think Mosley was just too damn fast, faster than Pacquiao. This was a beastly line up. If this took place in 2009: Arum would have problems working with Dibella and Oscar would be in rehab and would miss negotiations. Floyd would outbid himself in the negotiations, Mosley would have a dental appointment, and Duran would be too busy eating live animals... but we can all dream...

amayseng says:

Duran was a damn beast. He beat the hell out of SRL in their first match.

Carmine Cas says:

This is a tough lineup, I don't have an issue with Duran at top though