

Pacquiao Regresses Against Bradley But Wins Bigger This Time

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Monday, 14 April 2014 08:44



This past weekend Manny Pacquiao 56-5-2 (38) beat Timothy Bradley 31-1 (12) for the second straight time in the ring and the first time on the officials' scorecards. Pacquiao regained the WBO welterweight title via a 12-round unanimous decision (116-112, 116-112 & 118-110) and handed Bradley his first official loss.

I scored the fight 117-112 / 8-3-1 Pacquiao and only gave Bradley one round after the fifth, the 11th. It was an easy bout to score and can be said with impunity that Pacquiao won no less than eight of the 12 rounds the fight went. However, before the fight there were a few questions lingering over both Pacquiao and Bradley as fighters.

Those questions were answered definitively Saturday night. What did we glean from the Pacquiao-Bradley rematch?

Let's start with Bradley. First of all, it was confirmed beyond all doubt that Bradley has a great chin and has suffered no telling physical effects from his war with Ruslan Provodikov a little over a year ago, unless stupidity counts.

Secondly, he should dump his father as a corner-man and adviser. What a monumental mistake it turned out to be having Bradley do all that weight lifting and in the process make Tim think he had linebacker strength and Thomas Hearn's-like punching power. In case his father didn't know, punchers are born and not manufactured or created by weight lifting. Bradley is not a puncher and never will be regardless of how big his muscles get.

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Also, Team Bradley really rolled the dice with their game plan of trying to steamroll and knock Pacquiao out this time. Then Bradley really let the fight get away from him when after five rounds he realized that a) it wasn't going to work and b) it was depleting his strength and taking a lot out of him physically. Before the fight Bradley's trainer Joel Diaz said that Manny can be out-boxed, and he's right. What he can't be is repeatedly suckered into a counter right hand, which was basically all Bradley tried to do after the fifth round. Bradley changed his strategy for a reason after the fifth round, and it had nothing to do with his leg as he said after the fight. My guess is that he realized he was in harms way and very well might get knocked out going for the kill and trying to get Pacquiao out of there by being so aggressive.

I said before the fight the best thing for Manny heading into the rematch was the decision that went against him in their first meeting, and that he very well might lure Bradley into thinking he had to win some of the exchanges with an exclamation point, and that's exactly how he fought through the first five rounds. The part I blatantly missed was how Bradley seeing Juan Manuel Marquez stretch Pacquiao out face-first with a counter right hand led him to think that Pacquiao was so easily susceptible to that punch. After round five all Bradley really did was try to bait Pacquiao into walking into a big right hand counter, which Manny picked up quickly and never fell into the trap. Shame on Bradley for getting away from who he really is as a fighter and thinking that Pacquiao could be so easily suckered by the same punch for seven straight rounds.

It's obvious that all that was said and happened after their first fight really affected Bradley in a big way, and not for the better, at least this past Saturday night. Bradley better put down the weights and go back to being a boxer who utilizes the tools he was blessed with at birth. When all is said and done, he fought a stupid fight and Pacquiao by just sticking to who he is as a fighter played a huge role as to why he won the rematch so comfortably in the eyes of everyone.

In regards to Pacquiao, he was beautiful in the way he kept his cool and never once veered away from who he is and how he fights. Pacquiao showed superior ring savvy and the utmost professionalism. He even stepped back and waited for Bradley to get out of position and over-commit (something Bradley was trying to get him to do most of the fight) when Tim was trying to bring the heat and fight as the attacker. Then Manny countered and moved and easily won most of the exchanges with his straight lefts and hooks inside. Actually, Pacquiao didn't make one stylistic adjustment in this fight because he didn't have to, he just took advantage of Bradley being all over the place and losing site on what he needed to do to have his best shot to win the fight.

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A lot of Pacquiao fans aren't gonna like this, but Pacquiao wasn't as good physically in this fight as he was the first time. Yet because he fought smartly and Bradley made more mistakes, Pacquiao won the rematch by a wider margin. Lucky for Bradley that Manny has slipped noticeably as a fighter and can no longer pull the trigger instinctively like he once could. Had that not been the case he might have stopped Bradley this time. At this stage of his career, Pacquiao needs to think about pulling the trigger and it was impossible not to see that against Bradley this past weekend. Don't get me wrong, Pacquiao is still very dangerous and would be a solid favorite over anyone else at 147 except Mayweather. The problem is Manny has to work to get himself in that frame of mind. You no longer see that joy of fighting that was so natural to him when he was younger. And his merciless killer instinct is gone and never coming back. That beautiful flow that was part of his style is gone too. Against Bradley Saturday night, a lot of the time you could see that he was telling himself there were things he should be doing, rather than just doing them. He beat a real good fighter without too much trouble, but he would've taken Bradley apart five years ago. Did Pacquiao look like a physically shot fighter with nothing left on April 12th, no, absolutely not. Put those rumors to rest for the time being. Is he still one of the two best fighters in the welterweight division and top pound-for-pound fighters in boxing, yes! But he is clearly on the decline and isn't the supernova he once was when we picture him in our mind. Luckily for him he didn't need to be that great in order to defeat Bradley either time. Sure, he can fight Juan Manuel Marquez again and it would be huge, because it always is. But they're both eroding, yet still capable of hurting each other. In all honesty I'd rather not see them fight again.

In the rematch with Bradley, Pacquiao didn't turn the clock back or re-invent himself stylistically. What he did was fight smartly and in a measured fashion against an opponent who had no idea what would work but felt desperate to make a statement and earn the decision he was given the last time they fought. What Pacquiao showed mostly is how confident he is in himself and how he doesn't fold under pressure. Like he's often said, "if you don't wanna lose, then don't fight." I am in no way writing Manny Pacquiao off as a great fighter. What I am saying is, he's not the super fighter he once was circa 2008/2009 and has even regressed some since the first Bradley fight two years ago despite beating him more convincingly this time.

Sure, Pacquiao can beat Bradley and probably every other welterweight in the world seven days a week. But at 35 with a lot of wear and tear on his body from almost 20 years fighting as a pro, he can't blow through 'em like he used to. Before the fight Saturday night I said emphatically, with no wiggle room, "Floyd Mayweather will lose the first round looking Pacquiao over, then proceed to out-box and out-fight him on his way to winning a lopsided unanimous decision, if they ever fight." Well, I've revised that. I still think Mayweather loses the first round, but I think there's a 50-50 chance that Mayweather wins by stoppage. Manny is not the instinctive catch n' kill terror he was when the talk of them fighting first began roughly six years ago, and that will aide Floyd to the point of no return.....Floyd is simply too physically big, long,

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strong, quick and fundamentally proficient for Pacquiao now and will dominate him when they fight.

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jzzy says:

Agree with you on all points, Frank. Bradley lost his composure by trying to turn it into a brawl and burnt out early, not what you expect from a world class fighter. His beach muscles were a detriment. PACMAN fought like a cagey veteran and at this stage of a long career, that's all we can expect. Marquez, Pacquiao, Hopkins, Cotto, etc. are all on the downslope and Mayweather will be joining them soon. I'd prefer to see Pacman retire, but I know he wants another crack at Marquez. But Mayweather is quickly running out of opponents, he's on borrowed time too. We'll see what transpires.

SouthPawFlo says:

Good Article...

I think Bradley's Corner got Outclassed by Roach, and Somebody should've told Him to switch to plan B....