Thumbs up for Morales' heart and guts. But Lotierzo thinks he'll be going down, hard, on Saturday. (Hogan)

As of this writing Manny Pacquiao is considered by most boxing observers to be the best pound-for-pound fighter in boxing. It's been six years since he suffered his last loss, when he was out-boxed by Erik Morales in March of 2005. And to Pacquiao's credit, he avenged the loss to Morales twice by stoppage in 2006. Since losing to Morales, Pacquiao has been on a tear and has won titles at 135, 140, 147 and 154. On the other hand Morales, 34, is 3-4 since beating Manny and has been soundly defeated fighting between 133 and 147.

In another twist of fate, Morales fights Marcos Madiana 29-2 (27) this weekend for the WBA interim super lightweight title in Las Vegas. And next month Pacquiao, 32, defends his WBO welterweight title against Shane Mosley, 39, in Las Vegas. Pacquiao is nearly a 7-1 favorite to beat Mosley and Morales is a 6-1 underdog to Maidana. Talk about two fighters going in different directions. Pacquiao in all likelihood will end Mosley's career and Maidana will probably end Morales'. Hopefully, neither Morales or Mosley will suffer a horrific beating at the hands of the young lions they're fighting. However, I wouldn't bet on it.

At one time Morales and Mosley were two of the greatest warriors and fighters in boxing, but today they're finished as world class fighters and are only getting the chance to get devastated in their final marquee bout because of their name and what they've accomplished throughout their decorated careers. Since Mosley doesn't fight for another month, let's focus on Morales.

Morales 51-6 (35) has been a professional fighter for the better part of the last two decades. He's a certain Hall of Famer and sadly because of the way his career has wound down and Pacquiao's has ascended, Morales's accomplishments have been somewhat forgotten. When Morales was fighting between 122 and 130 he was a genuine terror. His resume is littered with outstanding/great fighters who he beat. But he's never been anything special as a lightweight. All the wars he had prior to his days fighting above 130 stretched him physically at both ends and like a worn rubber-band, once it snaps, it's done forever. Morales is finished as a world class championship caliber fighter. There was even a time that it appeared Erik recognized it and stepped away from the ring. But like all great boxing warriors the trait that made them great eventually gets them destroyed at the end of their career.

Not only is Morales an old 34, he's fighting a guy in Maidana who is naturally bigger and stronger than he is, and if that weren't enough, Maidana is fighting with a chip on his shoulder after being convincingly defeated in his last fight versus Amir Khan. Maidana is an attacker, he could care less what his opponent has in his hands power wise when he fights. Add to that he knows Morales wasn't a big puncher at 130, what kind of a puncher does he believe he'll be facing in him at 140? I'd bet that Maidana is relishing getting into it with Morales. If Maidana knows one thing it's that he won't have to look long or hard for Morales, and the first time he touches him with something big, he'll have the knock down drag out slugfest he likes. Not only is it probable that Maidana will make Morales flinch with everything he lands, do you think he's the least bit concerned with what Morales will be sending back at him? No. Actually, he'll probably feed off of it and grow stronger and more confident as the fight progresses.

Recently Maidana said, "I'm going to come out throwing punches, guns blazing. If he can withstand it, great; if he can't, then good night." That's not a comforting thought for Morales being that Maidana is the younger, hungrier, stronger and bigger fighter who actually had Khan shook a few times when they fought. And it required Khan to fight the signature bout of his career to better Maidana who's fought at 140 or above his entire pro career.

Last week Morales said, "Everybody says Maidana hits too hard, I don't believe that. I can handle him." Which just goes to show that the heart and spirit of Morales is still willing, and

unfortunately that's what'll lead to his downfall and provide Maidana with one of the signature wins of his surging career. No way will Morales's body be able to cash the check that his heart and character will attempt to write when he meets Maidana at center ring this Saturday night.

During Morales's sabbatical from boxing circa 2007 - 2010, he blew up to 190 pounds. He said, "Lots of meetings and eatings. No working out. I just kind of moved from restaurant to restaurant. I ate everything I wanted and drank everything I wanted." The more you get into this fight and look at all the variables surrounding it, it's a wonder that Morales is only a 6-1 underdog for his upcoming suicide mission.

Because of the names Maidana and Morales fans will most likely watch the fight. But this won't be a competitive bout. I just wonder how, after all his years in the business, Morales doesn't know enough not to make his first big fight back against the exact type of fighter who is most suited to derailing and maybe hurting him. Tim Bradley would have been a better choice for him to fight in this spot.

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