Written by Frank Lotierzo
Saturday, 07 May 2011 12:30

Manny looking trim and confident at the Friday weigh in. (Tom Casino photo)

It's fight day and as expected WBO welterweight title holder Manny Pacquiao 52-3-2 (38) was everywhere. He's been on the late night talk shows, he just recently recoded a CD and forget about reading something pertaining to boxing on the Internet, he's plastered all over it. He is in fact the face of boxing and combat sports in 2011. His opponent tonight, former three division champ Shane Mosley, is basically an afterthought and seen by most as a sacrificial lamb.

The hysteria over Pacquiao, 32, is almost Tyson like circa 1986-90. It's probably not a reach to think that the boxing world would be almost as stunned by a Mosley upset over Pacquiao as it was 21 years ago when Buster Douglas shook the planet when he knocked out undisputed and undefeated heavyweight champion Mike Tyson and shattered his myth of being invincible forever.

We better enjoy Pacquiao for however much longer he's around and fighting at his current level. He is without a doubt an all-time great pound-for-pound fighter/boxer and he's really compiled a stellar body of work and he's not done. Amazingly just a little over five years ago he was seen as a noticeably flawed fighter. In Pacquiao we have a fighter who was an established multiple division title holder who has ascended to almost a deity. Has any other fighter made a transition like that as completely as Pacquiao has?

Just five or so years ago as an established fighter he was seen more or less the equal of Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales and Juan Manuel Marquez. And it was around that same time that he was viewed as a one-armed fighter who fought sporadically, rushed his punches, didn't have anything close to good balance, and he even was stopped twice. Today, his stoppage defeats are thought of as something that happened to him in another lifetime, and for good reason. He's never been close to being stopped in almost 12-years.

Heading into tonight's bout with Mosley, Pacquiao is correctly viewed as a complete fighter. The balance and punch variation are tremendous. He's developed a terrific right hand that he uses as a set up or finishing punch. Instead of being all over the place winging his shots, he fights in a natural rhythm in which the intensity escalates as the fight progresses.

There's been mass hysteria over other fighters since Sugar Ray Leonard retired. We had Mike Tyson after Leonard, who before his personal life unraveled was viewed as a genuine life-taker. Back in the day when Mike fought everybody made sure they caught the fight just to see Tyson take someone apart in a brutal fashion. Then there was Oscar De La Hoya. Only Oscar was more of a media creation with crossover appeal who had enough going on around him (including his central casting good looks) that everyone could grasp at something to like or dislike about him. Which ultimately led to a lot of interest and tickets being sold when he fought,

regardless of the opponent.

Pacquiao is more in the mold of Tyson. There's interest in Manny when he fights because he's not like many other fighters we've seen. He can box, move, and punch with the best around. He's fast and quick and he throws punches in bunches as a southpaw. And based on some of the shots he was forced to eat against the likes of Miguel Cotto, Joshua Clottey and Antonio Margarito, if looks as if Manny can also catch with the best of the best as well. Not to mention he's won a piece of a world title in a record setting eight divisions.

And just like it is the case with all great fighters, some question Pacquiao's opposition since he's moved up from lightweight. Remember, these are the fights that pushed him from being regarded as one of today's pound-for-pound greats to being thought of by some as Sugar Ray Robinson's equal. Oscar De La Hoya looked bad against Steve Forbes and Floyd Mayweather before Pacquiao beat the hell out of the corpse that remained. They say Ricky Hatton was a solid fighter who was softened up by Floyd Mayweather before Pacquiao blitzed him. Miguel Cotto was brutalized by a fighter in Antonio Margarito who may have been fighting with loaded hand wraps the night they fought. Not to mention Cotto had to come in at a catch-weight of 145 for a welterweight title bout. Joshua Clottey was a one armed bandit who lost every time he stepped up and fought an elite fighter. And Antonio Margarito only had one fight in a year and a half before fighting Pacquiao in another catch-weight bout. Yes, that's the resume that Manny has strung together that has caused the Pacquiao frenzy. Having said that, it's not so much the level of competition Pacquiao faced in those bouts, it's the brilliance that he showed in dominating them.

Forget about whether or not you buy the above as the be all end all. Those are the fights in which Pacquiao's performance has him being compared to the greatest of the greats. He's surely eclipsed Barrera, Morales and Marquez and has to be thought of as an all-time great by anyone's standards or criteria. He's truly the best the sweet science has to offer today. However, the Robinson comparisons are ridiculous along with some others. But that's an argument for another time.

The question that remains is - has any fighter risen in the public's estimation so dramatically at such a late stage of their career as Pacquiao? I don't know of any.

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Comment on this article

Radam G says:

I guess that it is easy to believe in things that are long gone, and things that one is an earwitness of. When you don't like the norm of the reality and actuality of the eyewitnesses, just create mythology and let it roll. How will someone not there really know? A lot of the oldtimers -- many dead -- said that Sugar Ray Robinson was not all that, and he was a notorious ducker

and woman whupper. WTF! And films and hard journalistic reporting show them to be correct. But apologists will always say that you cannot tell by films and don't believe everything that you read or hear, and that "his best bouts were not filmed." P4P GOAT will forever not be proven. And to each, his own poison to choose.

The norm of boxing is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. The game is prizefighting, not pridefighting. Fight who gives you the biggest purse is as OLD as the GAME. Masterweaving Scribe Springs T's investigative masterpieces have revealed the skinny and da phat on that issue. In 50 years, there will be an augment about who was greater, Superman Roy Jones, or Money May, or THC PacMan, or Sugar Ray Leonard. I doubt that there will be many thoughts about Sugar Ray Robinson. I saw an old piece of "Wide World of Sports" the other day. The piece was original telecasted in 1976. The experts then were saying Jack Dempsey was the "number one great heavyweight of all times." You don't hear that jive now. The man now is GOAT Ali, hands down. Holla!

Big Daddy says:

Nothing against Manny.. But he's nowhere near the phenom that Tyson was. Tyson was truly considered invincible and was an absolute icon. People still name their Dogs or Kids after him just because of what the name represents.

DaveB says:

I'll still go with Sugar Ray Leonard as being the best I've seen in my lifetime. He had the mental as well as the physical and he had plan B and C if needed. He beat Hitman Hearns. Pacquaio isn't finished yet. What if Mayweather were to beat him or he gets knocked out by someone else in a shocker? From the films I've seen of Sugar Ray Robinson, I'm talking prime Sugar Ray Robinson, he looked like the real deal to me.

michaelabii says:

I agree. I think Ray Leonard at 147 was a pure fighting machine. His earlier fights were masterpieces of speed, precision and power.

zadoc says:

I'm really looking forward to this bout.
Who do you think will win the boxing match, Manny Pacquiao or Shane Mosley?
Poll: [url]http://www.wepolls.com/r/201994/Who-do-you-think-will-win-the-boxing-match

Coxs Corner says:

Anyone who says that Ray Robinson doesn't look like the real deal doesn't know what they are watching.

the Roast says:

If we're talking about a dream fight between Manny and Ray Leonard at welter, I'd pick Sugar Ray by KO. Left hook inside, lights out for Pacman.