BoxRec.com doesn't agree with Marquez' shirt. But Raskin and many others at TSS think Marquez has Manny's number, to a degree, and think even at 147, he'll give Pacquiao problems. (Hogan)

Since Manny Pacquiao vs. Shane Mosley was billed as a major "event," I'm going to take the glass-half-full approach and call the past week or so in boxing "eventful." There is indeed a lot to comment on besides just the material covered in my PPV running diary (http://tinyurl.com/42h2rv7), and let's start with an email about the headliner of last Saturday's big event:

Hi Eric,

Do you think it's a myth or it's exaggerated that Manny Pacquiao has improved so much since his second fight with Juan Manuel Marquez? For me he looks exactly the same, slightly heavier and slower (I think he has lost a gear since the Cotto fight), and his opponents have been good style matchups for him—fighters who are not difficult to hit and can't fight off the back foot and are not as complete boxers has Marquez, Erik Morales, and Marco Antonio Barrera were, which has in effect made him look much improved.

Cheers,
Nicholas

Hi Nicholas,

I tend to agree with you for the most part. I think Pacquiao continued to improve after the Marquez rematch, but only incrementally, and the improvement largely came via Pac-Man feeling better physically from 135-145 pounds than he did at 130. I suspect the Marquez rematch was the last time Pacquiao had to deplete himself at all to make weight. He's been more comfortable in every fight since, and it's shown in his energy and explosiveness in the ring. Yes, he made some technical improvements in 2008 and 2009, continuing to work with Freddie Roach on his footwork, his upper body movement, his right hook, etc. But did he make dramatic improvements? No. Most of the dramatic improvements were made between 2005 and 2007.

The styles and sizes of his opponents have indeed played an enormous role in what we've witnessed. David Diaz was the ultimate alphabet-belt cherry pick. Oscar De La Hoya looked like a dangerous opponent coming in, but we know now that his age and the 147-pound weight limit rendered him impotent against someone with Pacquiao's magnificent speed and skills. I believed from the moment the fight was signed that Ricky Hatton would make Pac-Man look

better than ever.

Miguel Cotto was a true challenge and a championship-level fighter who was more or less in his prime, but he was also a little too slow-fisted and nobody's idea of a defensive wizard. And the three opponents since—Joshua Clottey, Antonio Margarito, and Shane Mosley—each possessed some combination of big/slow/old that turned their fights with Pacquiao into target practice.

I'm not trying to put a revisionist-history spin on any of this. Pacquiao is the best fighter in the world, clearly. He's an all-time great. I don't rule out the possibility that, when his career is over and we have some distance and can look back on it objectively, we'll be able to place him in the top 10 or 20 boxers ever. What he's done is remarkable. But I do think he's slowing down just a little (we'll probably remember 2009 as Pac-Man at the absolute peak of his powers), and I do think he's benefited from not facing a clever boxer since Marquez. That's why I want to see a third fight with Marquez in the fall, even if it has to be at a disadvantageous weight for JMM. Marquez can outbox Pacquiao. He knows how to counter Pacquiao's offense. I don't think he'll win, and I think there's an excellent chance Pacquiao knocks him out this time. But at least Marquez's style is not made to order. That's the fight I wanted to see in May, but Bob Arum insisted on feeding Pacquiao what was left of Mosley, entertainment and intrigue be damned.

It's time for Pacquiao to face someone who can really box. All things considered, if Pacquiao-Floyd Mayweather and Pacquiao-Sergio Martinez aren't realistic (and they aren't), then Pacquiao-Marquez III is the best option for the fans, and Marquez's ring intellect alone guarantees Pac-Man will have to work harder than he did in his last three fights. Pacquiao's one-man show is getting a little tiresome; Pacquiao-Marquez would at least look like a two-man show at times.

Good email, Nicholas. A fine setup for a lowercase-"r" rant. Now let's get to the capital-"R" Rants:

• Norm MacDonald's comedy sketch with Pacquiao? Outstanding. Norm MacDonald's decision to bet $25,000 on Manny? Intelligent. Norm MacDonald's live tweeting of Saturday's fight? I'll sum it up in terms Norm can appreciate: "Note to self: No more live tweeting."

• Actual internet headline from last week: "Pacquiao Using Yellow Gloves." Yeah. I think maybe we've surpassed the amount of web space that should be devoted to boxing reporting.

• I loved the idea of the "red carpet show" on Showtime Extreme, showing undercard bouts from the MGM Grand for free as both a bonus for hardcore fight fans and an 11th hour PPV sales technique. Not everything Bob Arum/Showtime/CBS tried in the last couple of months worked, but there were a lot of promising experiments to build on for future events.

• This just in: Yuriorkis Gamboa has been found guilty of excessive holding against his wife.

The judge will dock him a point and release him on his own recognizance.

• I understand why some ESPN2 Friday Night Fights broadcasts begin after their scheduled start times. But what's the excuse for when FNF starts BEFORE its scheduled start time? Unless you're opening the show with Yuri Foreman hurrying to get his bout in before sundown, there's no acceptable explanation.

• Aaron Pryor Jr. gets a little bit better every time I see him fight, and certainly his upset of Librado Andrade on Friday was the crowning achievement of his career so far. It's really quite incredible, to see the son of a Hall of Famer begin his boxing career with no hype at all and gradually earn acclaim and opportunity. Good for Pryor. Even though he's three feet taller than his old man, I'm beginning to think they really might be blood-related.

• Since "sources close to the situation" are generally about as trustworthy as "sources close to The Situation," I'm not putting much stock in the rumors that the Quebec boxing commission is considering forcing Bernard Hopkins and Jean Pascal to submit to a special drug test. But if this is somehow true, it had better be a test all fighters competing in Quebec must take from now on. The commission can't change the rules just for one fight, based on the local fighter's unfounded accusations.

• Last week, Twitter recommended I follow Jeremy Piven. Now I know how women feel when their boyfriends buy them the wrong birthday presents. I thought we were connecting, Twitter! But you apparently don't know me at all!

• We won't know for sure until CBS makes a decision on whether to match FOX's offer, but it's possible that Gus Johnson will be switching networks, meaning he'll no longer be the voice of Showtime Championship Boxing. On the one hand: Thank you to the universe for the course correction. On the other hand: Who the heck am I going to make fun of? I feel a little like Jon Stewart when George W. Bush left office—happy on a personal level, but losing valuable material professionally.

• Not only do I recommend listening to last week's episode of Ring Theory (in large part because I make money if you decide to listen), but I also recommend reading the intelligent and thought-provoking comments posted by our listeners in response to the show (http://ringtheory.podbean.com/2011/05/04/ring-theory-may-3-2011/#comments). I'm proud to see that Ring Theory subscribers as a group seem to have a high IQ, even if Bill Dettloff and I spent an inordinate amount of time on the last episode making poop jokes.

Eric Raskin can be contacted at RaskinBoxing@yahoo.com . You can follow him on Twitter @EricRaskin and listen to new episodes of his podcast, Ring Theory, at http://ringtheory.podbean.com
.

Comment on this article