

Why Pacquiao-Bradley II Will Provide Better Action (and Fewer PPV Buys) Than Its Predecessor

Written by John Nguyen

Saturday, 25 January 2014 20:05



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Before all else, boxing is business. Just ask Manny Pacquiao. Not so long ago, Pacquiao occupied a perch he shared only with Floyd Mayweather as the only active boxers with true crossover appeal. Sponsorships, commercials, and high public visibility were all his provided he could keep winning.

Then, for a while, Pacquiao stopped getting his hand raised, and his career trajectory changed drastically.

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Sure, it can be soundly argued that both of his recent losses were aberrations of one sort or another. He seemed to do enough to clearly defeat Timothy Bradley in June 2012 in the eyes ringside observers, save two of the three official judges.

That's somewhat forgivable, although Pacquiao's reluctance to engage with Bradley for reasons unknown proved to be the difference between winning and questionably losing.

Then came his face-first nap courtesy of a brutal right hand from arch nemesis Juan Manuel Marquez in a fight Pacquiao was beginning to dominate at the time of his demise. Again, this was the type of loss that could be minimized; Pacquiao got nailed with a perfect shot as he recklessly closed in for the kill.

The casual fan, however, is not prone to overanalyzing the nature of wins and losses. Images, accurate or not, leave indelible marks. The image of Timothy Bradley taking Pacquiao's title is significant. The image of Pacquiao face down and motionless after eating a Marquez right hand is monumental. Boxing is business. Business is perception. The perception is that Pacquiao is damaged goods.

Reality says that this is a hasty conclusion. Against Brandon Rios, Pacquiao showed that he can still take care of business against a capable foe while being responsibly cautious.

He boxed effectively, showed that his hand speed is still intact, and showed a sturdy chin, which was a concern given the way Marquez knocked him cold. There was no electrifying finish, and the force of nature that was Manny Pacquiao circa 2009 was never on display, but the Pacquiao who showed up that night in Macau still looked like an elite level fighter.

However, the luster that once carried Manny Pacquiao's pay-per-view numbers to the million-buy mark with regularity was missing. His fight with Rios generated only around 500,000 buys; comparatively, his fight with Joshua Clottey, another relatively unknown B-side to the general public, managed to sell 700,000. Perhaps the Rios fight being held in Macau instead of Las Vegas hurt pay-per-view numbers, or maybe Pacquiao's low profile in the wake of the Marquez loss hurt his visibility. Regardless, it is difficult for the objective observer to perceive

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the results of the Rios fight as a resurrection of the Pacquiao brand.

Perception is everything. The opponent for Pacquiao's April 12 return is Timothy Bradley, who is undoubtedly Pacquiao's most viable and realistic big fight option this side of a pipe-dream megafight with Floyd Mayweather or a white-whale fifth fight against Juan Manuel Marquez. Bradley brings an interesting storyline to the fight due to the controversy of their first meeting, but he does not bring the kind of star power needed to make the fight a blockbuster. Bradley has a history of trouble bringing in big numbers at the box office. Dubbed "Desert Storm," Bradley brings truth to the notion that being a nice guy and a solid technician is the surest path to boxing anonymity, which seems especially unfair when considering the names on his undefeated résumé: Juan Manuel Marquez, Ruslan Provodnikov, Devon Alexander, Kendall Holt, Lamont Peterson, Nate Campbell, and Junior Witter. Bradley always finds a way to win, but has not often found a way to turn heads. His war with Provodnikov only drew about 3,000 to the Home Depot Center in Carson, California, which is only two hours from his hometown of Palm Springs. And while his pay-per-view fight with Marquez surpassed expectations with around 375,000 buys, most of those can be attributed to Marquez' immensely loyal fan base.

Top Rank will attempt to play off the controversy of the first fight as a selling point for the rematch, but that ploy will not be as effective as it might have been had there been an immediate rematch following the initial bout in June 2012.

Pacquiao and Bradley will meet again in April, almost two years will have passed since Pacquiao was robbed, which is an eternity when selling an event such as this. The searing outrage following the first fight has long since subsided; it was that outrage that would have pushed pay-per-view numbers for an immediate rematch well over the million buy mark (the first fight did 900,000 buys). As it is now, it's difficult to envision how the rematch will even manage to equal the figures for the first meeting.

The irony is that the rematch itself will likely far surpass the first fight in terms of action. Pacquiao, who paid so dearly for his cautious approach the first time around, will have Freddie Roach imploring him to take it to Bradley from the outset. Add in the fact that a loss for Pacquiao means permanent exile from the eight-figure paycheck club and the table is set for one of the most urgent efforts from Pacquiao in recent memory. If Pacquiao still wants to compete on this level, he simply cannot lose to Bradley in the rematch.

As for Bradley, he has carried a chip on his shoulder since the controversial first fight. Wanting

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to prove his mettle, he engaged in a life-and-death war with Ruslan Provodnikov that was both breathtakingly valiant and completely foolhardy. Then Bradley went on to display his fundamental skills in outboxing the future hall of famer Marquez. A legitimate win over Pacquiao would bring his redemption full circle.

In the rematch, expect the always-tenacious Bradley to prove an emphatic point in order to exorcise the demons of the first encounter. If Bradley comes out in the same blazing fashion that he did against Provodnikov, the result could be a barnburner. It might not be the most cerebral game plan, but Bradley has already shown a willingness to dispense with logic in favor of valor.

Ultimately, Pacquiao-Bradley II isn't just the most viable economic option for both fighters, but it may turn out to be one of the best big fights of 2014. Considering what is at stake for both men, the ingredients are there for something that, if not explosive, will still prove highly compelling. When that happens, fans win.

Hopefully, fight fans will realize a good thing when they see it.

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SouthPawFlo says:

Bradley Signed a Bad Deal, he's the champ and coming off the best year of his career, #3 pound for pound in the world on some list and he gets 6m and PAC gets 20!!! And he had to resign with Top rank to get the fight....

Bad Deal.....

I know Bradley isn't a big draw but he had leverage, he's the champ, and Pac doesn't have many other options other than The Russian, he coulda held out for more money.....

\$20M to \$6M for the undefeated champion!

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Radam G says:

You missed this one, TTS Scribe J (WIN) -- the way that your last name is pronounced by many in da know. Not "New-goo-yen," as da know nothings and rude like to invent.

This dance between Da Manny and the Cali Cranium Crusher Big Foot will do over a mil PPV payouts on the mainland USA. Maybe around 1.4.

This bout will definitely be action pack for a sec, before the CCCBF stumbles and tumbles over his long-@\$ doggs and land on that big-arse cranium!

Robbing Da Manny and muthasucking Pac-haters, posers, busters, _____ and _____ now all a suddenly coming up will all this interpolating garbage that Bradley -- with broken feet -- won the first bout and that Da Bobfather was in on a fix will be cause "America, The Beautiful" to BUY BIG!

Some of those dudes and dudettes will be buying PPVs and to flying to Sin City for the first time to see Da Manny beat down the loud-mouthed, delusional, boasting "Desert" chump.

Bradley is becoming the most hatred puglist around nowadays because of his interpolation of his illusions. Holla!

Radam G says:

YUP! A two-loss, undefeated champion with a 1,001 fanfaronades has a lot of bargaining power. NYET! This is the best deal of Bradley's career. He is right for taking the money and running. Because he will never have a larger purse. And he's getting KTFO! Holla!

Radam G says:

T Bradley dumped and dunked his manager Dunkin Donut -- I mean Cameron Dunkin -- to get this bout and that smaller purse. I guess that tells you about Bradley. Dude does more dunking than basketballer King (Lebron) James to have his way.

TB can buy a lot of donuts to dunk in his cocoa. And have chicken change to dump into his bank account. Hehehe! Holla!

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brownsugar says:

The article is on point... as much as I want to see Bradley apply what he learned in his first fight and knowing that Bradley prepares like nobodies business. Its hard to part with hard earned cash for two swollen super lightweights who are utterly isolated from the real welterweight competition. Let me know when the cold war is over.

amayseng says:

Who all is gonna be on this card?

I morally can't buy it just for this fight alone. Pac won 10-2 in rounds in the first encounter. Now Pac is looking better after peppering Rios with 758 head shots and Tim looks worse after being concussed 37 times by the russian.

Who all is on the undercard?

#1 PacFan says:

Guess who's back boxing fans. I see everyone still here.

#1 PacFan says:

I'm looking to resurrect my status on this great site like the GREAT Manny Pacquiao is with his boxing career. Manny will not disappoint as he will look to take out the Desert Storm early to make a statement that he still has that fire in the ring.

Radam G says:

Mabuhay, kabayan ko'y! Di ka dito matagal. Masayang ko'y lkaw balik na. (For all P-haters and Pac-hater, I'm hollering at my hommie.

We are ready to bring it, AGAIN! Da whole dang reality of the actuality. I got a plane to JACK -- I mean to catch! Holla!

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hurrah!

#1 PacFan says:

Hey RG! salamat pare ko. I'm glad to be back. Dang how long has it been? Manny's last hurrah!

Carmine Cas says:

The author does illustrate a good point in that time elapsed will make this a hard sell. However with time we've seen Manny recover nicely against Rios and Bradley prove his mettle against Provodnikov and skills against Marquez; silencing some of the critics. The fight is promotable and should be a good one, although Uncle Bob should provide a decent undercards as well.