

Behind the Scenes at Pacquiao-Bradley 2: Part Two

Written by Thomas Hauser
Wednesday, 23 April 2014 22:26



Tim Bradley arrived in dressing room #1 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena at 6:00 pm on the night of Saturday, April 12. He was wearing a black Nike track suit with a white Team Bradley logo and black Nike shoes with white trim. Tim's father (known as "Big Ray"), Joel Diaz, assistant trainer Samuel Jackson, conditioning coach James Rougely, and attorney Gaby Penagaricano were with him.

Bradley sat on a cushioned metal chair and rested his feet on another chair in front of him. HBO production coordinator Tami Cotel entered the room and asked if Tim would weigh-in on HBO's fight-night scale. Bradley complied. One day earlier, he'd tipped the official scale at 145-1/2 pounds. Now he weighed 152. Minutes earlier, Pacquiao (who'd weighed in officially at 145) had registered 151 pounds.

Brief dressing room interviews with Max Kellerman and Bernardo Osuna followed. Then Tim sat back on the chair and closed his eyes, envisioning the battle ahead. His family's financial future, his physical well-being, and his legacy as a fighter were all at risk. He was as well-prepared as he could be. But in all likelihood, so was Pacquiao.

At 6:25, Freddie Roach came into the room to watch Bradley's hands being wrapped. Tim took off his wedding ring and handed it to his father for safekeeping. Joel Diaz began taping. Roach's own hands were shaking visibly, a symptom of his Parkinson's condition. Big Ray offered him a chair. Roach gestured "no thank you."

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No one spoke. At 6:40, the taping was done. Tim took off his jacket and shadow-boxed for ten minutes, stopping twice to sip water from a bottle that his father was holding. Then he sat down again.

Bradley gets his game face on earlier than most fighters. The next few hours would be about fighting, not charm school. The look on his face said, "Don't f--- with me." He was summoning up an attitude.

Joel Diaz went next door to watch Roach wrap Pacquiao's hands.

Tim stayed on the chair -- sometimes with his eyes closed, sometimes open; sometimes with his head up, sometimes down -- playing different fight sequences through in his mind.

If I do this, Pacquiao will do that. If Pacquiao does that, what do I do next?

The mood in the dressing room was intense. There were no attempts at levity, no smiles, no upbeat conversation. Few words were spoken.

At 7:10, Big Ray spread two towels side-by-side on the floor. Tim lay down and began a series of stretching exercises; first on his own, then with his father's assistance. The exercises grew progressively more rigorous. At 7:40, Big Ray picked up the towels and Tim shadow-boxed again.

Referee Kenny Bayless entered and gave the fighter his pre-fight instructions.

After Bayless left, Tim resumed shadow-boxing.

Big Ray stepped in front of his son with a folded-up towel in each hand, assumed a southpaw

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stance to emulate Pacquiao, and aimed punches at his son. "Don't let him get lower than you," he cautioned.

"Put it together any way you want," Diaz counseled. "You're not a one-dimensional fighter."

At eight o'clock, Tim sat, once again staring silently ahead.

Big Ray, Diaz, and Samuel Jackson took on the role of a Greek chorus, voicing thoughts one at a time.

"Fast like lightning."

"Stay loose."

"Control the pace. Make him do things he doesn't want to do, and he'll get tired."

"Don't be a gentleman. Rip his ass up on the inside."

The voices were complementing, not competing with, each other.

"It ain't about strength. It's about knowledge."

"That right hand will get him every time."

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“Fight like a cat.”

“Fight smart.”

Big Ray slammed the palm of his hand down hard on the table beside him.

“Do not be on the ropes,” he said. “Do not be on the ropes. You’re in deep shit if you’re on the ropes.”

Diaz gloved Tim up.

More shadow-boxing.

Again, the Greek chorus.

“That’s the way. Snap those punches.”

“On the inside, keep both hands up by your head.”

“Watch for his right hook on the inside.”

“It’s your night, baby. It’s your night.”

Tim sat.

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“I’m excited,” he said.

Then he fell silent, his face registering a range of emotions.

The Greek chorus continued to sound in his ears.

“Right hand to the body. Hook to the body. Tear that body up.”

“If he gets under you, come up with the uppercut.”

“The conditioning is there. He won’t be able to deal with the pace.”

“Control him. Don’t let him control you.”

“Patience is a virtue. Take your time. If it goes twelve, amen.”

More shadow-boxing.

“We’re happy, man; we’re happy. Have fun.”

“Fight smart.”

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“You’re the real deal, babe.”

Bradley began hitting the pads with Joel Diaz.

“Right over the top,” Diaz instructed. “Beautiful. You got twelve rounds, twelve f-----’ rounds to time that punch. You’re the champion. You’re the boss. You’re the big dog. You’re the man.”

The padwork ended.

Earlier in the week, Diaz had said, “In this sport, the most important thing is to be a professional at all times, in the ring and out of it.” Now he told the men around him, “We’re a team. Whatever happens in the ring tonight, we keep our composure.”

Pacquiao could be seen on a television monitor at the far end of the room leaving his dressing room and walking to the ring.

“It’s fun time, baby,” Bradley said.

Then the members of Team Bradley joined hands in a circle and Tim led them in prayer. He asked for the strength to prevail in the battle ahead. He asked that both he and Pacquiao emerge in good health. And he closed with a final thought for the Creator.

“Love you, man.”

The fight itself was heartbreak for Bradley. After a tactical first round, the combatants exchanged in the second stanza with Pacquiao getting the better of the action. In round three, Manny scored big early and maintained his edge with speed and angles. Then Bradley found a home for his right hand, buzzed Pacquiao with a hard right up top, and took rounds four and

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five.

At that point, Bradley was where he wanted to be in the fight. Two of the judges (Michael Pernick and Craig Metcalfe) had him leading three rounds to two, while Glenn Trowbridge's card was the reverse. Tim's strategy from day one had been premised on the idea that the second half of the fight would belong to him.

But the unthinkable was happening. After round three, Bradley had returned to his corner and told Joel Diaz, "I pulled a muscle in my calf."

Now Tim's gastrocnemius muscle was tearing apart.

"You're losing your rhythm," Diaz told his charge after round six. "What the f--- is wrong?"

"I'm hurting," Tim answered.

The rest of the fight belonged to Pacquiao. Except for a right hand to the body that hurt Manny visibly in round seven, Bradley couldn't do much more than survive. He was now an impaired fighter. And round by round, the injury was getting worse.

Tim backed into corners, beckoned Manny in, and swung for the fences with wild right hands up top. The constant grinding aggression characteristic of his style was absent. It was an inexplicable strategy unless one knew the truth.

The final scoring of the judges was anti-climactic: 118-110, 116-112, 116-112 for Pacquiao.

Monica Bradley was waiting for her husband when Tim returned to the dressing room after the fight. Their 14-year-old son, Robert, and Tim's mother were with her.

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A large lump was visible on the back of Bradley's right calf. He was limping badly.

"What's up, baby?" Tim asked as he hugged Monica.

Then father and son embraced. "Some you lose; some you win," Tim said. "A champion has to accept defeat when it comes. I tried my best."

A kiss for Kathy Bradley was next. "I love you," Tim told his mother.

Joel Diaz took out his cellphone and began snapping photos of the lump on Bradley's calf.

A commission doctor came in and examined the injury.

"I don't want to go to the emergency room," Tim told the doctor. "And no wheelchair. I'm walking out on my own tonight."

Two days later, the injury was fully diagnosed. Bradley will be wearing a moon boot for the next three months. The muscle tear was frustrating given its impact on the fight and the role of the fight in Tim's life. But overall, fate has not been unkind to Bradley. In his three fights prior to this one (against Pacquiao, Provodnikov, and Marquez), he won decisions that could have gone the other way.

A fighter's first loss is particularly hard to accept, but Tim took it in stride. "I lost to one of the best fighters in the world," he told those gathered around him. "Pacquiao was on his game tonight. I did the best I could. I knew I was behind on points, so I went for the knockout with what I had. I'm a fighter. I'll be back. I'd like to fight him again, but he probably won't want to."

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Meanwhile, in the dressing room next door, Team Pacquiao was celebrating. But their joy was tempered by a deep cut over the left eye that Manny suffered after an accidental clash of heads in the final round. Thirty-five stitches would be needed to close the gash.

Pacquiao's journey in boxing will continue.

So will Bradley's.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thausen@rcn.com . His next book (*Reflections: Conversations, Essays, and Other Writings*) will be published by the University of Arkansas Press later this month.

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iriga city boy says:

Bradley lost that fight.No question.No doubt.What i like with this boxer is,he does not shy away from a fight unlike Maywaether who has so many demands and excuses.

Mr.Hauser brings us nice articles on boxing.Kudos for this man.I think he got it wrong this time on who's gonna win on this fight.Didn't he predict Bradley over Pacquiao?

From:Iriga City Boy

SouthPawFlo says:

Does anyone know the PPV totals from this Fight???

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=SouthPawFlo;50427]Does anyone know the PPV totals from this Fight???[/QUOTE]

Lol I was thinking the same thing. They have them, yet no one knows! When it's Floyd's fights, every reporter becomes a candidate for the Pulitzer, that's how well they investigate, anonymous sources and all.

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That said, Kevin Iole reported that the total was estimated between 800,000 and 825,000, which is a very good number.

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=SouthPawFlo;50427]Does anyone know the PPV totals from this Fight???[/QUOTE]

....though some people have told EM it's as low as 625,000!

The Shadow says:

Great read, by the way. This is some truly epic sh*t.