



# THE HITMAN AND THE PACMAN FACE OFF

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Photo courtesy of Zar Javier

considered] the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world," said Hatton during Tuesdays red carpet arrival in Las Vegas.

"To beat the pound-for-pound number one, you're beating the best fighter in all weight divisions. So I think a boxer cannot go any higher than that. So it's the biggest fight of my career."

It's a title that he once fought for before but lost. In December of 2007, Floyd Mayweather Jr. was atop the boxing world carrying the mythical pound-for-pound title when Hatton challenged him. The two were undefeated. It was a mega fight that drew thousands of people from Britain and the US to Las Vegas.

Hatton fought valiantly but was eventually knocked out by a devastating punch in the tenth round. The defeat was humbling for the Pride of Manchester. It made him look back at his career and change his approach.

"If anything Floyd Mayweather Jr. knocking me on my butt was the best thing that's ever happened to me," said Hatton who has a record of (45-1 32 KO's).

Hatton said after the fight he had to go back to the boxing basics. He fired his long time trainer Billy Graham and hired the estranged father of the only man that ever beat him – Floyd Mayweather Sr.

Under Mayweather Sr.'s tutelage, Hatton said he's transformed.

And all anyone has to do is watch his match there first match together against Paulie Malignaggi last November, he said.

"Everyone thought Paulie Malignaggi was going to outbox me, outspeed me, people expected him to beat me but I beat him in his own game in the end," said Hatton.

"I taught Ricky how to box," said Mayweather Sr. in a recent conference call. "Ricky didn't know anything. He has brute strength. When I first went down to England over the past for him, you know, it was horrendous. But, you look at him today. He's totally different. And that totally different gonna be explosive on May 2."

But don't think just because he's learning things technically that he's never done before that he's changed.

"Everybody thinks that just because of my new training camp that all of a sudden I've turned into a new twinkle toe jab and move boxer," said Hatton. "I am still aggressive. I'm still a body puncher. I'm still as ferocious as ever. I've just peaked technically. Now, I just jab more and just set up my attacks more."

#### Best Way to Beat Pacquiao

Hatton said that he's not afraid of Pacquiao. Pacquiao has only lost once in the past ten years. Hatton has only been defeated once in his whole career.

But the difference in this fight is weight, according to Hatton. While Pacquiao has more fights under his belt, he's only fought twice above the 130-pound weight class. Meanwhile, Hatton has fought in the Junior Welterweight and Welterweight division most of his career.

"He hasn't fought anyone that's going to be as ferocious, as powerful and as explosive as me," said Hatton. "I'm aware of [Pacquiao's] power but really should I be scared of a man who has only fought two fights above 130 pounds. That's not disrespecting Manny. I know he can hit but you know I've fought as high as 154 pounds the past four years."

Hatton said that he already knows what to expect from Pacquiao's once the two are inside the ring.

"I think he fights the same way all the time," he said. "He throws the same punches all the time. He throws a right jab, a one-two. He shuffles in and out with his feet, which obviously [if you don't get adjusted to], could cause you problems. But I think you get adjusted to this style - I don't see a versatile fight in Manny Pacquiao. So I think I will have more game plans in my favor. Especially the way I'm fighting now really."

With only a few days remaining before May 2, fans should expect fireworks, said Hatton.

"The fans are going to be in for a fantastic night and where I'm at the minute, I couldn't be any more positive about the outcome of this fight," he said. ■

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**L**AS VEGAS – If you ask Ricky Hatton what his ultimate dream is in boxing, he'll tell you candidly.

He wants to be considered the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world, a mythical title bestowed on the best boxer regardless of weight classes and divisions.

And he believes a win this Saturday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena over reigning pound-for-pound king Manny Pacquiao (48-3-2 36 KO's) will give him that recognition.

"If I beat Manny Pacquiao, I believe I should [be

**L**OS ANGELES – MANNY Pacquiao casually leans against the grey sofa, his head cocked forward like a Rodin statue, his left leg stretched out in a relaxed position. Members of his entourage flank him.



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Wearing a light blue shirt and white cap, Pacquiao's playing chess on top of a makeshift balikbayan box table. Winchell Campos, his long-time trusted advisor, sits across from him playing the white pieces. The pound-for-pound king is contemplating his next move.

It's Sunday, his only and last day off from training and the house is full of guests. It's hard to imagine how Pacquiao could concentrate or even rest, with so many people crowding him. The scene is like a Filipino family party. There's a lot of food, a lot of chatter, and a lot of cameras.

Except one thing, the cameras are all pointing towards one man. The video cameras and digital cameras are in front of Pacquiao's face capturing his every movement. He pays no attention to any of it. Occasionally, he looks up when a few fans would shove shirts and boxing gloves towards him for an autograph.

This is normal for Pacquiao. With his growing popularity and stature, he's accustomed the attention. This is a man that fights in front of thousands of people live and millions around the world. And if he wins his next fight, his popularity will soar like a NASA spaceship.

This Saturday, the 30-year-old Pacquiao (48-3-2 36 KO's) will face his biggest and arguably his toughest opponent. His match against Pride of Manchester Ricky Hatton (45-1 32 KO's), the Light Welterweight titleholder, has been sold out for weeks now at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. HBO 24/7 documentary crews have been following his every movement for the past months hyping the fight.

There's a lot stake in this match for Pacquiao. He's proven that he's the best at the 130-pound weight class, captured the Lightweight title in the 135-pound weight class, and defeated the Golden Boy of boxing.

After defeating "the King of pay-per-view" Oscar De La Hoya, which eventually lead to the Golden Boy's retirement, many boxing pundits are expecting Pacquiao to take over the reins as the cash cow of boxing.

It is something he's uncomfortable talking about.

"It's up to God," said Pacquiao to the Asian Journal. "Whatever he wants me to do. All I can say is that I am ready for Hatton."

#### Defensively Better

On this day, Pacquiao is losing in a game of chess.

He's cornered. The game is at its midway point. Campos has placed his horse in between Pacquiao's two rooks. No matter what move Pacquiao does he knows one of his rooks, a vital piece in chess, is dead.

Pacquiao places his hand on top of the queen. He looks at the board before withdrawing his hand after a minute of thinking.

He moves one of his rooks away and Campos immediately trades the horse for the other rook.

In the past, Pacquiao would have moved the queen in an offensive position, going for a full on attack.

But over the years, he's learned that sometimes you have to sacrifice a piece to set up the offensive game plan.

His chess moves have translated in the ring.

According to Freddie Roach, Pacquiao is more aware of his defense than offense.

"Yeah, definitely," said Roach about Pacquiao's improved defense. "We've been working on that for a long time... He's boxing a lot smarter now. It started in the [David] Diaz fight. He boxed a beautiful fight. I mean his defense is much better. The Oscar [De La Hoya] fight was similar and the way things are going in training the Hatton fight will be the [defensively] same."

Roach knows Pacquiao's boxing style better than anyone else. When Roach first started training Pacquiao, he was just a raw one-handed southpaw fighter.

But through the past few years, Pacquiao has improved his overall game.

"Yeah, after the [Erik] Morales loss, people criticized me about Manny being just a one-handed fighter and he has a left hand," said Roach in a conference call. "And, so it was my job to improve his right hand and he's come a long way and then I want to improve his defense...So, we're just trying to be better and better as time goes on. And one thing about Manny Pacquiao, he's the four or five time world champion and he's still getting better and he still wants to learn."

Roach said Pacquiao's determination is "unusual for somebody at his caliber, but he's very capable and he's getting better all the time."

The chess match against Campos ended up being a stalemate. A too-eager fan approaching Pacquiao for an autograph accidentally knocked the game board over, messing up all the pieces.

On Saturday, it's unlikely that Pacquiao's match against Hatton will end in a stalemate. The two are expected to brawl. And whatever happens, expect defense to be a key part in who wins the match. ■

#### Publisher's Note

**Pinoy  
Pride**

Pinoy fans wait with eager anticipation for the Pacquiao-Hatton match -- yet another monumental event in boxing history. But in the humble words of the pound-for-pound king, "It's up to God. Whatever he wants me to do. All I can say is I'm ready for Hatton," Team Pacquiao, The Asian Journal MDWK Magazine and the Fil-Am community leave everything to fate. One thing is certain -- Manny's kababayans will give their all-out support for the Pinoy champ as he embarks on yet another chapter of his boxing career. ■