

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

'I'm ready'—Pacquiao

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Pacquiao grunts, "Yes, I'm ready."

He hits Roach's mitts harder causing the latter to fall back momentarily. Roach turns to this reporter and nods approvingly.

"He's in his peak," said Roach to the Asian Journal. "We're ready for Ricky."

Pacquiao held his last workout on Thursday, April 30 before Saturday's much-anticipated match against The Pride of Manchester Ricky Hatton at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

Roach said that it was the final walkthrough of their game plan. Throughout the two-hour

workout, it's hard not to be impressed with Pacquiao's superb conditioning.

About 30 minutes of mitt works, another 30 minutes of walk through preparations, 30 minutes with the double-ended bag and other boxing drills and the last half hour was spent stretching and grueling abdominal exercises.

Afterwards, Pacquiao took off his shirt and did his best Mr. Olympia impersonation, flexing his cut muscles to the delight of the crowd.

With only a day remaining, Pacquiao tries to relax by watching the NBA playoffs.

He said watching TV is part of his pre-fight routine.

He's relaxed and prepared, he said. "I'm ready for Hatton."

Filipino time

Many Filipino fans were shut out watching their favorite fighter tip the scales Friday, May 1.

The public was invited to view Manny Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton weigh in before their match on Saturday, May 2.

But with so much anticipation from fans, people arrived early as possible.

The scheduled weigh in was at 3pm but people began to line

up as early as 7:30am to ensure their spot inside the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

By 9am the small group of ten people more than tripled.

By 11am, the hallway to the Grand Garden Arena was full with hundreds of people. The hallway to the arena was so full that security had no other choice than to open the doors.

At 1pm a British reporter estimated that 4,000 British fans were inside the arena. The small Filipino contingent (around a thousand) barely made a ripple of noise inside the arena.

The Brits were beating drums, chanting the Ricky Hatton wonderland song and any pocket of Filipinos cheering for Pacquiao were jeered.

One spectator said that the atmosphere was "electric."

Meanwhile, Pacquiao weighed in at an even 138-pounds, two pounds below the required weight limit. Hatton weighed in at 140 pounds.

Experts weigh in

Amir Khan has a unique per-

spective in this bout between Manny Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton.

Khan is from England. But he also trains under Freddie Roach and spars with Pacquiao.

He said that Pacquiao is very fast and powerful. Hatton is an excellent body puncher.

He doesn't want to create controversy because he hails from the same place as Hatton but he believes that Pacquiao should win the bout.

"It's all about who goes out there and wins the early rounds," said Khan to the Asian Journal. "If Manny wins the four, five or six rounds early, I don't think that Ricky can come back from that kind of lead. I like Manny by decision."

Renowned boxing historian Bert Sugar expects this match to be a brawl.

He said Hatton's brawling style bodes well for Pacquiao.

"Anyone who has watched 24/7 knows that Manny is trained to throw punches, then duck his head and step away to his left

or right," said Sugar. "This will work well against Hatton who frequently lowers his head and charges straight forward."

Sugar added that Pacquiao has to establish his jab to set up combinations and dictate the pace.

Sugar warned that Pacquiao could get reckless at times and often, the Filipinos speed and power cover the mistakes inside the ring.

"[Pacquiao] cannot afford to get caught up in exchange with the heavier-handed Hatton," said Sugar.

Sugar said that the only way Hatton could close the distance between him and Pacquiao.

"[Hatton needs to] throw punches from the outside," said Sugar. "Hatton needs to keep his hands busy from long range and not serve as a target for Pacquiao. He won't outspeed nor out punch Pacquiao from the distance, but will be much more competitive as he works to get inside."

Sugar added that Hatton has to pound Pacquiao's body to be effective. ■

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'It's insane': Pacman fame likened to Ali's

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fore mounting a small ring set up at the lobby.

Security personnel warded off surging crowds as Pacquiao got off the bus. Even for the world's top pound-for-pound fighter, the April 28 welcome still came as a big surprise for its sheer scale and zest.

"It's bigger than the (Oscar) De La Hoya one," Pacquiao said, recalling the arrival bash leading to his blockbuster welterweight showdown against the Golden Boy last December, which the Filipino won by a knockout in the eighth round.

'Most manic'

Arum likened Pacquiao's unprecedented fame after beating De La Hoya to that of heavyweight legend Muhammad Ali.

Arum noted that Pacquiao had even landed recently on Time magazine's list of the world's most influential persons, which included US President Barack Obama.

Dapper in khaki slacks, dark coat and Kangol cap, Pacquiao arrived with an entourage that included his mother Dionesia, chief trainer Freddie Roach and close friends Luis "Chavit" Singson and Wakee Salud.

"I don't want to talk too much before the fight," Pacquiao said. "I want to let my fists do the talking in the ring."

Hatton limo

Hatton, who alighted from a gleaming limousine in black shorts and a Hatton-brand T-shirt, joked with the crowd and posed for photographers before doing a brief workout at the 16,000-seat Grand Garden Arena, venue of the megabuck clash.

Though he remains unbeaten at 140 pounds, Hatton conceded it would have been tougher for him had he met Pacquiao earlier.

"Three or four fights ago, Manny Pacquiao would have beaten me," Hatton, bottled water in hand, later told reporters after the workout.

But after being trained by Floyd Mayweather Sr. and posting a win over Paulie Malignaggi last November, Hatton said, "I feel so much more relaxed because I'm boxing technically so much better. I'm jabbing and moving a lot better."

"I don't think (Pacquiao could win) now."

Scraping the surface


Slighted by the 2-1 betting odds favoring Pacquiao, Hatton vowed to prove he is the 140-lb king and to protect his crown from someone who has never fought at that weight.

"Maybe I could be too strong for Manny, but now it's not just strength and power. With the new team, we've scraped the surface. And I think you can see more improvement in that area. This is the best Ricky Hatton that has ever been." ■

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