

PACQUIAO WATCH: On the cusp

Contributed by Edwin G. Espejo
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GENERAL SANTOS CITY (MindaNews/07 June) --World Boxing Council (WBC) super featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao is on the verge of breaking history and may well be on his way to becoming the world's Number One pound for pound king following the announced retirement of Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Only WBC lightweight king David Diaz stands in the way of this historical feat that Manny is about to conquer.

No other Filipino boxer, and Asian for that matter, has won world lineal crowns in boxing in four different weight categories.

Manny, incidentally, holds the record of being the first Filipino and Asian boxer to annex three world boxing titles in three different categories. In the same manner, no other Filipino has ever crashed into the elite top ten pound for pound boxers – not in anyone's list since it became a popular barometer of one's boxing prowess.

Pacquiao now occupies No. 2 in most of boxing aficionado's who's who list.

It is paramount therefore for Manny to register a decisive and spectacular win against heavy underdog Diaz to achieve that unprecedented accomplishment.

But is Diaz really an easy picking for Manny?

Diaz holds a respectable record of 37 wins, 17 of them coming via knockout victories. He has one draw and his only loss was in 2005 against Kendall Halt and in came via an eight round TKO defeat.

Diaz is a slugger and will be a bigger boxer when he climbs the ring against Pacquiao.

Pacquiao will be fighting at 135 pounds officially for the first time in his career. Manny has been lackluster in his recent fights with only a knockout win over Jorge Solis since 2007.

He, too, was arguably fighting smaller opponents, having outgrown his erstwhile natural fighting weight at 130 pounds.

No doubt, Manny still carries the punch that has sent 37 of his opponents to dreamland.

But against a natural lightweight, will his punch still deliver that thundering impact?

Diaz was handpicked by his promoter Bob Arum of Top Rank, without doubt. From both financial and match-up point of view, the Diaz fight is tailor-made for Pacquiao. Team Pacquiao believes Diaz is the easiest fight there is in the new division Manny hopes to invade in his soon to end career.

At 30 and going 31, Manny has just a handful of fights left before some young upstarts get the good measure of him. He has been in so many brutal fights that preserving his legacy and reputation as one of the feared boxers to come out this side of the globe will become a priority for him and well-meaning friends.

Diaz is a plodding slugger with defense so lacking he will be easy prey to Manny's sharp and accurate punches.

But Manny has the propensity to relax and toy against opponents he thinks not in his class.

Manny better be wary against the southpaw Diaz who has also fought heavy handed opponents.

If not, Manny will have wasted his chances of establishing himself as the best Filipino boxer to ever don the mitts.

And who knows, the opportunity of earning more megabucks might just go down the drain. (Edwin G. Espejo is former editor in chief of SunStar General Santos)