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Manny Pacquiao: Greatest Filipino Boxer of All Time

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., Nov. 16 (PinoyGlobal) - On November 14, 2009, Emmanuel "Manny" Pacquiao made history with his victory over Miguel Cotto Jr. in their world welterweight championship fight. It was his seventh world title in his seventh weight class. He broke the record of Oscar De La Hoya who had won world titles in six different weight classes. In addition, Pacquiao is currently recognized by The Ring magazine as the world's number-one pound-for-pound boxer.

Pacquiao's victory over Cotto, Puerto Rico's best boxer, proved that he is -- undoubtedly -- the greatest Filipino boxer of all time. In my opinion, Pacquiao is the best boxer in the world today. It did come as a surprise then when his own promoter, Bob Arum, said after defeating Cotto that "Pacquiao is the best fighter he ever saw." And the best testimonial came from Cotto himself who said after the fight, "He is the best boxer I ever fought." Indeed, Pacquiao was only the second boxer who defeated him in the ring. Cotto admitted that he never saw Pacquiao's punches coming. But it was Freddie Roach -- Pacquiao's trainer since 2001 -- who said it all: "He's the greatest fighter of his generation."

In his moment of glory, Pacquiao could have done what Muhammad Ali used to say all the time, "I'm the greatest." But Pacquiao, humble as ever, said, "I just think I'm an ordinary fighter. When I fight a good fighter, sometimes I can beat him." And that's what makes Pacquiao greater than Ali -- humility.

Humility is what endears Pacquiao to his fans. And his greatest strength is his magnanimity to those whom he had brought down in ignominious defeat. But the image of a hero towering over a fallen adversary instills admiration in the minds of the millions around the world who watched him on television. Indeed, he is a superstar.

Pacquiao's rise to superstardom started six years ago, on November 15, 2003, when he faced Marco Antonio Barrera -- one of the best boxers in the world at that time -- in San Antonio, Texas. Pacquiao, known to his Filipino fans as "Pacman," was unknown to the rest of the world. American announcers and sports commentators couldn't even pronounce his name correctly. Oftentimes they'd pronounce it as "Pack you," which would elicit laughter from Filipino viewers.

When Barrera felled Pacquiao with a right cross early in their bout, everybody thought that it was over for him. But Pacquiao got up and charged Barrera. In the third round, Pacquiao knocked Barrera down with a power punch. Barrera was stunned. He got up and continued fighting but Pacquiao relentlessly barraged him with power punches. The referee stopped the fight after the 11th round. Pacquiao raised his arms, smiled, and cried while his corner men draped Philippine flag around him. It was Pacquiao's first world title -- the world featherweight champion. The "zero-to-hero" legend of Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao was born.

Pacquiao became a living “national hero” to the 92 million Filipinos. Born dirt poor, his father abandoned his family when he was young. His mother, Dionisia, raised her six children doing odd jobs. Pacquiao dropped out of school to eke out a living selling doughnuts. On his free time, he would go to the local gym and work menial jobs. And this was where Pacquiao saw an opportunity to make a better living. Little did he realize that he would some day become one the world’s best boxers and one of his country’s richest people.

After the Cotto fight, sports commentator Larry Merchant said, “Pacquiao came from zero to hero and hero to Nero!” Merchant may have picked “Nero” because it rhymes with “hero” but I think he meant it as the highest compliment he could give to Pacquiao -- an “emperor” among modern-day gladiators.

Indeed, it could also be prophetic. Pacquiao has shown interest in politics. As a matter of fact, he ran in 2007 for a congressional seat representing his district around General Santos City. Unfortunately, he lost to the incumbent who belongs to an entrenched family dynasty in his province. But that didn’t discourage him.

Right after his stunning second-round knockout of Ricky “Hitman” Hatton last May 2009, Pacquiao formed the “People’s Champ Movement” (PCM) and registered it as a “local political party” with the Commission on Elections; thus, allowing PCM to field candidates in local positions in General Santos City and Sarangani province. Speculation is rife that Pacquiao might either run for a congressional seat or as mayor of General Santos City next year. However, with his record-setting victory over Cotto last night, I would not be surprised if Pacquiao would run for a higher office.

It is interesting to note that before Pacquiao left his training camp in Baguio City for Los Angeles, California, prior to the Pacquiao-Cotto fight, he was visited by Sen. Manny Villar, a presidential candidate in the 2010 elections. Was it just a social call or did the two discuss politics? I wouldn’t be surprised if Pacquiao is also being courted by other presidential candidates to be on their senatorial slates. His chances of winning a senatorial seat out of 12 slots are far better than running for a congressional seat in his province. The only difference is that it would take a lot more money to run for the Senate. But money shouldn’t be a problem with Pacquiao -- he’s got tons of it.

At the end day, regardless of whether he’s going to run for office or not, Pacquiao is within reach of the pinnacle of his boxing career -- a victory over Floyd “Pretty Boy” Mayweather Jr. Rated by the Ring magazine as the world’s number one pound-for-pound boxer from 2005 to 2008, Mayweather has won six world titles in five different weight classes. He was named by The Ring magazine as “Fighter of the Year” in 1998 and 2007. He vacated his WBC welter-weight title undefeated when he retired in 2007. His current record is 40 wins including 25 knockouts.

If Pacquiao were to defeat Mayweather, he would attain absolute “greatness” in boxing history and it would dispel any iota of doubt that he may have been just lucky in beating his opponents. But like someone once said, “The harder you work, the luckier you get.” Pacquiao knows the value of hard work and that’s his secret for being “lucky” most of time. His current record -- 50 wins including 38 knockouts, three losses, and two draws -- attests to that.

If Pacquiao and Mayweather agreed to a match, it would be a fight of epic proportion never seen before in a quarter century. Indeed, it can be billed as the “Battle of the Titans.”