

OPINION

Not just a hero

EDITORIAL

HE isn't called "Pacman," "Destroyer" or "Pambansang Kamao" for nothing. In every fight, Manny Pacquiao always makes sure he puts his best foot forward, delivers the perfect punches, upsets his opponent to make his countrymen proud. All of these were coupled with strong prayers, rigorous preparations, and a remarkably strong will power.

When Pacquiao knocked out "Dangerous" David Diaz last Sunday in less than three minutes in the ninth round, Pacquiao showed something to the Filipinos – that no matter how tough or intimidating his opponent seemed to be, the Filipino indeed has the heart of a true winner.

Filipinos though have yet to see through Pacquiao's fresh reputation and new record in the boxing world in order to grasp that message. Of course, it is worth noting that Pacquiao has made history in his latest fight being the first Asian to clinch four titles in four weight divisions, being the new World Boxing Federation (WBC) lightweight champion, and being hailed as the new pound for pound king. It may all be but, overwhelming the Filipino people surely have never been this proud and happy.

But beyond all the wild applause and cheer, the celebrations, the betting games, the Filipino people should by now have taken

to heart the lesson Pacquiao is imparting us in his fight – that no problem, no hindrance is ever too big to face, to solve, and to beat. This lesson is timely, now that we are at the height of a global crisis. Oil prices go up almost every week, food and basic commodities are as costly as can be. Disasters bring about lost lives and missing bodies. But through it all, all we need is hope and the mighty resolve to get through everything.

Most importantly, we have to do our part – to know what our challenges are and the responsibilities attached to it. After his momentous win, Pacquiao will be given another hero's welcome. He is a national hero, no doubt. Each fight he had showed a momentary zero crime rate in his country. His victory is every Filipino's victory. But there will be more opponents to face, more boxing rings to conquer, more stuff to prove.

Still, Pacquiao will be there in the limelight taking every blow mustering all his strength and hanging on every thread of hope to win. He will keep teaching us that Filipinos can outdo, outclass and outshine any blocks to our national goals. He is not just a hero, he is a living inspiration, a vital role model. May we all see that and do our part to be an inspiration as well, in our own knock-out ways, to our nation and to the world. (AJ)



How Manny did it

SPORTING CHANCE

Joaquin M. Henson

LAS VEGAS – There are only eight fighters in history to claim five world titles in different divisions and newly-crowned WBC lightweight champion Manny Pacquiao is in the elite cast.

The roster lists Tommy Hearns, Sugar Ray Leonard, Oscar de la Hoya, Floyd Mayweather, Lester Ellis, Hector Camacho, Roberto Duran and Pacquiao. James Toney, who used to be handled by Pacquiao's trainer Freddie Roach, was excluded from the roster because his fifth crown came in the largely unrecognized supercruiserweight division.

That's quality company for Pacquiao who made the lineup for winning the WBC flyweight, IBF superbantamweight, Ring Magazine featherweight, WBC superfeatherweight and WBC lightweight crowns. Although the Ring Magazine title wasn't sanctioned by any of the four major governing bodies (WBC, WBA, IBF and WBO), it just can't be ignored because Pacquiao gained the "people's" recognition by beating the acknowledged champion at the time, Marco Antonio Barrera.

How did Pacquiao dethrone David Diaz as the WBC 135-pound titlist here Saturday night? Here were the 10 ways.

- Right hand charm. The plan was for Pacquiao to use the right to set up the left. Pacquiao's execution was perfect. Because Diaz is a southpaw like Pacquiao, he was particularly vulnerable to the right. Pacquiao didn't only employ the right to jab but also to hook and cross.

- No chance for Diaz. The 1996 Olympian couldn't launch a sustained attack because Pacquiao took him off his flow from the onset. Pacquiao kept Diaz at bay with the right jab and repeatedly found the mark with his left. Diaz was transformed into a human punching bag and couldn't defend against the blinding speed of Pacquiao's blows.

- Confusing the enemy. Diaz couldn't figure out where Pacquiao's punches were coming from. Pacquiao kept him guessing throughout the bout as he varied his mode of attack. He darted in and out. He stood his ground and engaged. He went upstairs and downstairs. Sadly, Diaz looked like he didn't belong in the same ring as his classy opponent.

- Slipping and sliding. On defense, Pacquiao used footwork, head movement and lateral movement to frustrate Diaz who begged for a standing target but the Filipino just wouldn't oblige.

- Stayed active and aggressive. Pacquiao gave

it everything he had. He threw 788 total punches, compared to Diaz' 463, and maintained a high work rate. Pacquiao pressured Diaz from the start and left him fumbling in his tracks.

- Too fast for Diaz. Pacquiao set a frenetic pace which Diaz couldn't cope with. He dazzled Diaz with his dizzying handspeed and moved side to side, confusing the champion whose only approach was going forward. Diaz, who is notoriously slow, just couldn't keep in step with the fast-moving challenger.

- Pacing. Roach was careful not to burn out Pacquiao in pressing him into first gear all the way. Pacquiao conserved his energy for the big push in the late rounds. He won every single round in the three judges' scorecards and could've gone the distance without running out of gas. His conditioning was superb. Two of the three judges even marked the second round 10-8 for Pacquiao without scoring a knockdown.

- Two-fisted power. Skeptics who doubted if Pacquiao could carry over his power to the lightweight division were silenced. Pacquiao launched a two-fisted assault that turned Diaz into a bloody mess. It wasn't just his potent left that did the damage. The right was as forceful. In the end, a left hook sent Diaz to the canvas but it was set up by the right jab.

- Patience. Diaz' durability was incredible. He took heavy punishment from Pacquiao from the first to the eighth rounds but was never in danger of falling. Pacquiao could've gotten exasperated. He could've lost his patience. But he kept his composure, picked his spots and when the opening finally came, it was lights out for Diaz.

- Killer's instinct. Pacquiao wouldn't let Diaz off the hook. He softened Diaz up for the kill. When Diaz began to show signs of fading, Pacquiao stepped up his attack. Yet, as soon as referee Vic Drakulich ruled it was over with Diaz almost out cold face first on the canvas, Pacquiao's first instinct was to rush to his victim and show concern for his condition.

Make no mistake about it. Diaz was a legitimate world champion. Pacquiao was just too overpowering that he made a good fighter look terribly bad. It's hard not to look bad when you're up against the world's No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter. (Philstar.com)

JIM Strickland, trainer of David Diaz, was quoted to have said before the Manny Pacquiao-Diaz showdown that "I want him (Diaz) to start faster for this fight as Pacquiao may run him over."

Run over Diaz is exactly what Pacquiao did in their battle for Diaz's World Boxing Council lightweight title Saturday night (Sunday morning in the Philippines) by taking all eight rounds prior to sending the game and tenacious Mexican-American to the canvas bloodied face first at 2:24 of the ninth round. At fight's end, I had Pacquiao way ahead, winning all rounds, 80-72. With the victory, Pacquiao achieved a record of being the first Asian to win titles in four different divisions: flyweight, super bantamweight, super featherweight and lightweight.

By getting his fourth title, the last two within two months of each other, Pacquiao joins, among others, Pernell Whitaker, Tommy Hearns, Oscar de la Hoya, Sugar Ray Leonard, Roy Jones Jr. and Roberto Duran. Pacquiao has also reasserted his claim as the world's best pound-for-pound fighter. Floyd Mayweather Jr. had held the distinction before he retired but unlike Pacquiao (who fights anyone), Mayweather seemed to be too cautious in his last few fights and had the reputation of picking his opponents.

It was clear that Pacquiao had too much speed, power (in both hands), too much variety in the punches he was unloading and too much skill for the average Diaz who could not get his brawling style of fighting going because of Pacquiao's speed and the Filipino icon's stiff right jab that kept the amiable and like-

Totally outclassed

SPORTS FOR ALL

Philip Ella Juico

able champion at bay.

The first time I saw that jab being developed by Pacquiao's chief trainer, Freddie Roach was at the Wild Card gym in Los Angeles when the former was training sometime in October 2006 for his second fight with Mexican living legend, Erik Morales. As soon as I saw Pacquiao master the right jab and improve his footwork, I said that Morales was in deep trouble. Pacquiao did use that same right jab to overcome succeeding opponents like Mexicans Marco Antonio Barrera and Juan Manuel Marquez.

Pacquiao's metamorphoses from a so-called one-armed bandit into a two-fisted attacker, proved the point of boxing expert Cesar Medina of Bgy. Sta. Teresita in Quezon City who would say, "If Pacquiao wants to finish his opponent with his left, he has to do it with his right." And this is exactly what Pacquiao did in stopping Diaz: two quick right jabs set up the picture-perfect, textbook-type left hook that had Pacquiao's whole 145 pounds behind it and landing square on the jaw of the off-balanced Diaz.

In contrast, Diaz seems to have been biased against the jab which is for long distance fighting compared to the hook which is for medium distance and the uppercut for very short distances. The brawler that he is, Diaz saw little use for the jab and preferred short power punches thrown during close quarter fighting. That spelled his doom against

Pacquiao who picked his spots, unleashing four or five shots at a time before moving out of Diaz's reach and leaning tactics.

Diaz himself confirmed the impact of Pacquiao's speed so graphically when he was interviewed atop the ring moments after the fight. Totally oblivious to the international audience, Diaz used a four-letter word that starts with the letter "f" and ends with "k" (and I'm not referring to the word "fire truck"), Diaz said, "His speed was more than what I expected. He was (four letter word) fast." Fightnews.com would later quote Diaz: "Did anybody get the number of that truck (in reference to Manny Pacquiao)? Today is the day that we lost. Tomorrow is another day. He's fast. The speed was the difference in the fight. I have all the respect for him."

Diaz apparently had hoped to do the same thing that he did in his last few fights before being thoroughly outclassed by Pacquiao. He had hoped to bring in the same stamina, aggression, hooks, crosses and uppercuts in toe-to-toe exchanges with Pacquiao. One is therefore reminded of Argentina's bull from the Pamapas, Oscar Bonavena who, like Diaz, only knew one direction: forward. Diaz's style also reminds one of the relentless Smokin' Joe Frazier and Fists of Stone, Roberto Duran.

What's in store for Pacquiao? There's no shortage of opponents who want to cash in on Pacquiao being such an attractive draw. He can afford to bide his time and campaign in the 135-pound division and even move up to 140 for a fifth title. The important thing is to remain focused and remove all distractions. (Philstar.com)

Pacquiao's lightning jabs for education

EARLIER, I wrote that from indications, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Sulpicio Lines appeared to be innocent in the recent sinking of MV Princess of the Stars, the biggest commercial ship in this country. But after listening to the explanation of PAGASA's director, Dr. Prisco Nilo, on our dzRH radio program last Sunday evening, it appears that both the PCG and the shipping company have a lot to explain.

Nilo said earlier indications were that "Frank" was going to hit Bicol. At 11:20 a.m. on June 20, the PAGASA weather bureau hoisted Typhoon Signal No. 3 over Masbate, southern Bicol, Samar and Leyte, even as various tracking centers around the region indicated the typhoon wouldn't hit here at all. The same day at 8 p.m., the PCG allowed the Sulpicio ship to sail from Manila to Cebu City with Signal No. 1 over Manila. Later, however, the typhoon veered from the Bicol region and cut across Western Visayas and headed toward Southern Luzon.

Nilo said that at 11 p.m. that same night, Signal No. 3 was hoisted over Western Visayas, including Romblon and Mindoro—the very route the ship would take. He said other boats left Manila that day but took cover in various places. Only Princess of the Stars continued its journey. Nilo said PAGASA

was issuing major bulletins every six hours as well as interim ones, using voice servers, email, text messaging, etc. and held no fewer than five press conferences during the typhoon.

Nilo also stressed that PAGASA's equipment was modernized in recent years with substantial funding from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who chairs the meetings of the National Disaster Coordinating Council during calamities, and a Japanese grant.

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The media reported that Sulpicio Lines planned to sue PAGASA for issuing "faulty" reports and failing to communicate to the ship. But is this PAGASA's job, or does this belong to the PCG? The Manila Standard reported that Sulpicio was operating by an old circular governing the movement of ships in bad weather, and its owner claimed they never got the June 2007 circular. It's obvious that there was a failure of communication between the regulating agency and the shipping line. (Is it true that the PCG was resorting to texting only? Everyone knows that a text message can be delayed by as much as three hours.) There are also reports that the vessel's engine conked out and that cargoes were not latched, causing the ship to roll from side to side.

Let's hope the Board of Marine In-

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

quiry would rise above the old boys' network and get to the bottom of the truth, so that deadly mistakes won't be repeated. After all, Nilo warns that anywhere from 14 to 16 typhoons are still expected to strike until the end of the year, some of them quite strong.

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In the last two weeks, the nation agonized over the powerful storm that caused death to hundreds, particularly in the sea tragedy in Romblon, and enormous dislocation and loss of livelihood in many communities. Thus the "masterpiece" of a victory by Manny Pacquiao was a welcome respite. Our champ was magnificent in his lightning speed and endurance. It was obvious that his Mexican-American opponent didn't know what hit him. Pacquiao, who wrested the World Boxing Council lightweight crown from David Diaz in Las Vegas, is undoubtedly the greatest Filipino boxer of all time. He joins the legends in the boxing hall of fame.

But there's also an interesting facet about our champ that is worth stressing. Despite his enormous fortune, Pacquiao

realizes that he needs to invest more in his formal education, having finished only grade school owing to poverty during his youth. This is something our young people, who idolize the champ, should emulate.

Over the weekend, Education Undersecretary Vilma Logroño-Labrador, chair of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, revealed to Cecile Alvarez and me during our radio show on education that Pacquiao had been working to get a college education after passing the Department of Education's accreditation and equivalency test with flying colors, scoring well in subjects like writing and math. Pacquiao consulted senior department officials about going into higher studies, exhibiting an inclination toward law. However, Education Secretary Jesli Lapus told him he could always hire the best lawyers in town, and advised him to focus on how to manage his fortune well.

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The champ followed the secretary's wise advice and over the past two years, he has enrolled at the college of business administration of Notre Dame University in his native General Santos City, with former city mayor Rosalia Nuñez as his private tutor. Let's hope that the efforts of our boxing icon to better himself in the field of education and culture

would greatly inspire and encourage our young people to also take their education seriously.

If Pacquiao, with all his millions of pesos sees the need to go back to school, so should they who have much less in life take their schooling seriously. It's the only sure way to upward mobility, even if you can throw punches like Pacquiao.

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Lauro Baja Jr., our immediate past permanent representative to the United Nations, has accepted an appointment as foreign affairs consultant to Senate President Manuel Villar and the Senate. Baja is a multi-awarded career diplomat and recipient of many decorations, including the Order of Sikatuna, the University of the Philippines Alumni President's Award, the United Nations Award and The Outstanding Filipino award. He was twice selected president of the UN Security Council, presiding with distinction when the Philippines chaired this very important body.

Baja's latest appointment is in recognition of his expertise in foreign affairs, particularly in multilateral and bilateral diplomacy. It's also an indication that Villar is serious about forming a think tank, obviously in preparation for his running for president in 2010. (Inquirer.net)

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