

BOXING

Money says mega-fight is not good versus evil

Pacman wants to inspire the 'weak' as classic Vegas showdown nears

By **AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE** in Las Vegas

Floyd Mayweather said on Wednesday his long-awaited showdown with Manny Pacquiao is not a battle of good and evil as the two rivals went eyeball-to-eyeball at their final pre-fight news conference.

"I am a realist," said Mayweather, the 38-year-old American who has parlayed a perfect 47-0 ring record into a reign as the highest paid sportsman on the planet.

"This fight is not good versus evil. It is one fighter who is at the top and another."

Pacquiao, a two-term congressman touted as a potential future president of the Philippines, is beloved as a humanitarian in his native land.

A devout Christian who has put his womanizing and gambling days behind him, Pacquiao said on Wednesday his main aim in taking on Mayweather in what will be the richest fight in boxing history was to inspire the weak and glorify God.

Mayweather, an energetic trash-talker in his younger days, has not been afraid to compare himself favorably to Muhammad Ali, or to flaunt the perks his wealth has brought — houses, cars, even an airplane.

Nor is Mayweather a stranger to violence out of the ring, serving jail time for one of several incidents of domestic violence.

None of that will matter on Saturday when the two climb into the ring at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

"I believe in my skills. I believe I will be victorious," said Mayweather, who puts his World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association welterweight belts on the line against Pacquiao, the World Boxing Organization champ who boasts a record of 57-5-2.

For more than five years, contractual hurdles and animosity between the camps kept the top pound-for-pound fighters of their generation from meeting in the ring.

Pacquiao promoter Bob Arum, whose Top Rank Promotions is partnering with Mayweather Promotions to produce the event just as television rivals HBO and Showtime have come together in a rare partnership, said the experience had been "hellish".

Intriguing matchup

But now the long-awaited bout is set to break all of boxing's revenue records, capturing the imaginations of fight fans and casual observers around the world.

"I don't take nothing away from Pacquiao, he is going to be an intriguing matchup on Saturday," Mayweather said. "He didn't get to where he got by not beating tough opponents."

It is that kind of measured respect that has Pacquiao trainer Freddie Roach doubting Mayweather's heart is in a fight from which he stands to make \$200 million.

"I wonder if he's going to show up," Roach said shortly before the fighters took the

stage at the MGM Grand's 1,950-seat Ka Theater — usually the home of Cirque du Soleil.

Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson strolled in — only one of the boxing legends, A-list celebrities and casino high-rollers drawn by the buzz surrounding the fight.

But the pre-fight festivities have offered few fireworks.

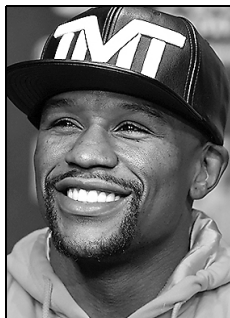
"I think he was forced into this fight," Roach said of Mayweather before the news conference, adding he thought Showtime pushed Mayweather into the bout.

"I don't think he wants to fight this fight. He didn't get to pick his opponent."

Older and wiser

But Mayweather said he just does not need to indulge in the kind of brash talk that was the hallmark of his younger days.

"From the beginning of my career I have always had a game plan," Mayweather said. "I make calculated moves in the ring and out of the ring. Me speaking loud and having personality, I did that in the past."



“It is one fighter who is at the top and another. I believe in my skills. I believe I will be victorious.”

Floyd Mayweather Jr.

"I'm a lot older and wiser, this fight sells itself. I don't have to do it."

A world champion in five weight divisions and closing in on Rocky Marciano's iconic record of 49-0, Mayweather scoffs at the notion the 36-year-old Pacquiao, winner of world titles in an unprecedented eight weight divisions will be the one to get past his consummate defense.

But Roach, who admits he has been studying Mayweather for years — ever since the fight was first supposed to materialize in 2010 — believes he knows the key to a Pacquiao victory.

"I think we have more speed, more power and I think we're 100 percent ready for what he brings to the table," said Roach, who is unimpressed by Mayweather's unblemished record.

"I think losses make you a better person and a better fighter," Roach said. "You learn much more from a loss than you do from a win."

TABLE TENNIS



Poland's Natalia Partyka, born without a right forearm, serves by holding the ball in her arm crook during her singles match against world No 1 Ding Ning of China on Tuesday. ZHENG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Polish star setting new standards for disabled

By **SUN XIAOCHEN** in Suzhou, Jiangsu
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There are quite a lot of people who are able to play table tennis with disabilities but only a few make it to the high levels of the sport and even less compete against able-bodied world champions.

However, Polish player Natalia Partyka, who was born without her right forearm, has proven nothing is impossible in table tennis as she is one of the very few athletes who have competed at the Paralympics and the Olympics.

The 25-year-old is one of only 12 people to have participated in both Games and the only one to have taken part in at least four Paralympics and two Olympics.

Despite losing to China's world No 1 Ding Ning on Tuesday in the second round of the women's singles at the World Championships in Suzhou, Partyka won over the Chinese audience and media with her commitment to the sport.

"It was more difficult in the beginning because, with the disability, people think it's impossible to play table tennis but I just came to practice. The only thing I was sure of was I

wanted to play. I just tried to do this my own way," she told China Daily after her loss to Ding.

Partyka began playing table tennis at 7; motivated by the desire to beat her older sister, Sandra. She then started to practice with her sister regularly at a local club in Gdansk and sometimes played at home on the kitchen table, bouncing a ball against the wall.

"At the beginning, I had no chance against her. Every time I wanted to beat her, I ended up failing, so I just wanted to try harder. I enjoyed that from the beginning. Later on, I wasn't even thinking about other sports. I knew it was the thing I'd love to do in the future."

At 11, Partyka became the youngest athlete to participate in the Paralympic Games at Sydney 2000.

Though she lost in Sydney, Partyka came back to win her first Paralympic gold medal in class 10 singles at Athens in 2004 and won again at Beijing 2008 and London 2012.

After achieving a golden three-peat at the Paralympics, Partyka has set her sights on more challenging goals.

"I won everything there, so I want to play with able-bodied athletes here with more diffi-

culty. They are playing much better, so I know I have to improve. Maybe I can't achieve top 10 or 20, but top 40 I can try," said Partyka, who is ranked 73 in the sport.

Partyka's coach, Michal Dziubanski, is full of praise for his student.

"Natalia is a special girl, we are all very happy that she has a sport she likes and she is trying to make the best in her life. She is a great sportsperson. All Polish men are proud of her for what she's done on the international stage," he said.

Boasting an inspirational story and a marketable look, Partyka is a star in Poland with continually growing numbers viewing her personal website and official account on Facebook as well as YouTube.

"It feels good if people recognize me on the street and tell me they like my game. But my goal is not getting popular but improving my game," she said.

Partyka's dedication to the sport also won over her Chinese opponent.

"I really admire her strong willpower over her physical disability. So I show her full respect by studying her techniques and styles seriously before and fighting to my utmost against her in the game," said Ding.

Dishing up special fare in Suzhou

Rou Jia Mo, a Chinese street food dubbed "the world's first hamburger", has turned out to be the favorite dish of Chinese ping-pong players at the World Table Tennis Championships in Suzhou.

Chefs in Suzhou, the home of Su cuisine, which is one of China's famous four major cuisines, provide the players with more than 14 dishes at every mealtime. However, the competitors prefer the snack from Northwest China's Shaanxi province.

Originating from the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), Rou Jia Mo, which translates as "meat placed between bun", consists of minced meat inside a bun.

"The ping-pong players are mainly from northern China and

like food made of flour rather than rice. At first we didn't have many dishes made of flour and they pointed that out. So we made changes and even had one chef transferred to here who specializes in making Rou Jia Mo," said Zhou Min, a chef at the hotel where the Chinese team stays.

A male player can devour three or four of the "Chinese hamburger" at one meal while a female generally struggles to eat one. "Our Rou Jia Mo is already oversized," said Zhou.

Braised fish in brown sauce is also a favored dish. "At first we steamed the fish to retain its original taste but the players wouldn't touch it. So we

stewed the fish in brown sauce, braised it with sugar and vinegar, or now fry it with salt and pepper. Then they like the fish very much," said Zhou.

The chefs are provided with beef, lamb, pork, chicken, three kinds of fish and more than 10 vegetables. All ingredients have been examined to make sure they contain no stimulants, said Zhou.

Like the Chinese team, other countries are provided with different meals by the hotels where they stay. For example, the hotel where the Japanese team resides provides competitors and delegates with Japanese and Chinese dishes.

— WANG SHANSHAN AND SUN XIAOCHEN

Digest

BASKETBALL

Abdul-Jabbar examined at hospital

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar briefly returned to hospital, two weeks after undergoing quadruple coronary bypass surgery, but his business manager said it was just a precaution and the NBA's career scoring leader is doing fine.

Deborah Morales said the 68-year-old Abdul-Jabbar experienced a heart irregularity of some kind on Wednesday morning and was examined by doctors at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. She claims he did not have any chest pain.

Morales says the Hall of Famer was examined and released after about an hour, was feeling fine and resting comfortably at home. Abdul-Jabbar scored 38,387 points in 20 seasons with the Milwaukee Bucks and Los Angeles Lakers.

Clippers coach fined for bashing refs

The NBA fined Los Angeles Clippers coach Doc Rivers \$25,000 on Wednesday for publicly criticizing the officiating in his team's home playoff loss to San Antonio on Tuesday.

Rivers lashed out at the officials after the team's 111-107 defeat, which put it on the brink of elimination.

The reigning NBA champion Spurs lead the best-of-seven Western Conference first-round series 3-2.

"I don't complain much," Rivers said, "but I thought we got some really tough calls tonight. Some brutal calls."

SOCCER

Crown not sure yet, says Mourinho

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho insists the English Premier League title has not been secured yet, despite moving to within one victory of mathematically clinching it.

The team ensured it would be crowned champion if it beats Crystal Palace at home on Sunday after coming from behind to win 3-1 at Leicester on Wednesday.

"I cannot touch the trophy, we still need two or three more points," said Mourinho. "We need three points to be completely safe. We all had in our mind we had to try and do it at Stamford Bridge. The momentum we had was that. We want to bring it to Stamford Bridge."

Juve within point of 4th successive title

Juventus put one hand on the Serie A title on Wednesday after a brace from Carlos Tevez saw the champion come back from a goal down to win an entertaining match with Fiorentina 3-2.

Victory moved it to within a point of its fourth straight league crown on an incident-packed night that saw 27 goals scored in eight matches.

Juve now needs just a draw at Sampdoria on Saturday night to win the league before Tuesday night's Champions League semifinal clash with Real Madrid in Turin.

TENNIS

Djokovic pulls out of Madrid Masters

World No 1 Novak Djokovic will miss the Madrid Masters next week to rest as he attempts to complete the career Grand Slam at next month's French Open.

Djokovic also missed last year's tournament in the Spanish capital due to a wrist injury.

The 27-year-old has been in sensational form this season, winning the Australian Open and Masters series events Indian Wells, Miami and Monte Carlo.

However, he has chosen to forego the chance to extend his lead at the top of the rankings even further in his quest to end Rafael Nadal's dominance on the clay in Paris.

GOLF

Spieth off the mark at WGC Match Play

Masters champion Jordan Spieth launched his assault on the WGC Match Play Championships at TPC Harding Park in San Francisco on Wednesday with a comfortable opening victory in the new-look \$9.25 million event.

The in-form 21-year-old, fresh from a scintillating start-to-finish victory at Augusta, had little difficulty in putting away Finland's Mikko Ilonen 4 and 2.

It was a sobering reality check for Ilonen, the lowest ranked player in the field who had only traveled to California as a reserve before entering the tournament when Phil Mickelson withdrew from the 64-man field on Sunday.

ICE HOCKEY

Ovechkin, Price, Tavares listed for award

Washington forward Alex Ovechkin, Montreal goalie Carey Price and New York Islanders forward John Tavares are the finalists for the Hart Memorial Trophy as the NHL's player most valuable player.

Ovechkin won the award in 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2012-13. The Russian star scored 53 goals to top the NHL for the third straight season and fifth time overall. He finished with 81 points — his most since 2010-11 — to lead the Capitals to their seventh playoff berth in the past eight seasons.

Price led the NHL in wins (44), goals-against average (1.96) and save percentage (.933), becoming the first to top all three categories since Ed Belfour in 1990-91.

Tavares had career highs in goals (38) and points (86).

AGENCIES

Scoreboard

BASEBALL

Results of MLB games on Wednesday (home team in CAPS):
Tampa Bay 3 NY YANKEES 2 (13 innings)
DETROIT 10 MINNESOTA 7
BALTIMORE 8 CHICAGO WHITE SOX 2
HOUSTON 7 SAN DIEGO 2
CLEVELAND 7 KANSAS CITY 5
BOSTON 4 TORONTO 1
SEATTLE 5 TEXAS 2
MILWAUKEE 8 CINCINNATI 3
MIAMI 7 NY METS 3
WASHINGTON 13 ATLANTA 4
PITTSBURGH 8 CHICAGO CUBS 1
ST. LOUIS 5 PHILADELPHIA 2
LA ANGELS 6 OAKLAND 3
ARIZONA 9 COLORADO 1
LA DODGERS 7 SAN FRANCISCO 3

BASKETBALL

Results of NBA playoff games on Wednesday (home team in CAPS):
ATLANTA 107 BROOKLYN 97
(Atlanta leads best-of-seven series 3-2)
MEMPHIS 99 PORTLAND 93
(Memphis wins best-of-seven series 4-1)

ICE HOCKEY

Result of NHL playoff game on Wednesday (home team in CAPS):
TAMPA BAY 2 DETROIT 0
(Tampa Bay wins best-of-seven series 4-3)

SOCCER

English Premier League
Result on Wednesday: Leicester 1 (Albrighton 45+3)
Chelsea 3 (Drogba 48, Terry 79, Ramires 83)

German Cup

Semifinal result on Wednesday:
Arminia Bielefeld 0 VfL Wolfsburg 4 (Arnold 8, 55, Luiz Gustavo 32, Perisic 51)
Played Tuesday:
Bayern Munich 1 (Lewandowski 29) Borussia Dortmund 1 (Aubameyang 75) - after extra-time
Dortmund won 2-0 on penalties

Italian Serie A

Results on Wednesday:
Cesena 2 (Brienza 56-pen, Carbonero 70) Atalanta 2 (Pinilla 50, 82)
Chievo 1 (Meggiolini 11) Cagliari 0
Juventus 3 (Llorente 36, Tevez 45+1, 70) Fiorentina 2 (Gonzalo 33-pen, Ilcic 90)
Lazio 4 (Parolo 10, Klose 13, Candreva 16, Keita 81) Parma 0
AC Milan 1 (Mexes 66) Genoa 3 (Bertolacci 37, Niang 49, Falque 90+3-pen)
Palermo 2 (Vitello 10, Rigoni 26) Torino 2 (Peres 13, Maxi Lopez 60)
Sampdoria 1 (De Silvestri 65) Hellas Verona 1 (Toni 68)
Sassuolo 0 Roma 3 (Doumbia 6, Florenzi 27, Pjanic 74)

Spanish La Liga

Results on Wednesday:
Eibar 1 (Piovaccari 51) Sevilla 3 (Bacca 7, 15, Reyes

64)
Real Madrid 3 (Rodriguez 44, Dos Santos 49-og, Arbeloa 84) Almeria 0
Celta Vigo 1 (Nolito 89) Malaga 0
Eliche 4 (Jonathas 6, Lomban 20-pen, Pasalic 54, Rodrigues 90+1) Deportivo la Coruna 0
Villarreal 0 Atletico Madrid 1 (Torres 69)

TENNIS

ATP Munich Open

Results on Wednesday (x-denotes seedings):
1st rd
Pablo Andar (ESP) bt Joao Souza (BRA) 6-4, 6-4
2nd rd
Roberto Bautista (ESP x3) bt Janko Tipsarevic (CZE) 6-0, 6-3; Vitor Estrella (DOM) bt Janko Tipsarevic (SRB) 6-4, 6-7 (1), 7-5; Philipp Kohlschreiber (GER x5) bt Alexander Zverev (GER) 6-2, 6-4; David Goffin (BEL) bt Simone Bolelli (ITA) 7-6 (5), 6-7 (4), 6-1.

ATP Estoril Open

Results on Wednesday:
2nd rd
Richard Gasquet (FRA x5) bt Kenny De Schepper (FRA) 6-2, 6-3; Nick Kyrgios (AUS x7) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 6-3, 6-3; Nicolas Almagro (ESP) bt Leonardo Mayer (ARG x4) 7-6 (4), 6-2; Robin Haase (NED) bt Feliciano Lopez (ESP x1) 4-6, 7-6 (2), 6-4.

ATP Istanbul Open

Results on Wednesday:
2nd rd
Roger Federer (SUI x1) bt Jarkko Nieminen (FIN) 6-2, 7-5; Santiago Giraldo (COL) bt Andrey Rublev (RUS)

6-4, 1-6, 6-3; Daniel Gimeno (ESP) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (KAZ x6) 6-3, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x8) bt Jurgen Melzer (AUT) 6-0, 6-2.

WTA Prague Open

Results on Wednesday:
1st rd
Lucie Hradecka (CZE) bt Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS) 6-1, 7-5; Tereza Smitkova (CZE) bt Lucie Safarova (CZE x2) 6-3, 2-6, 6-4
2nd rd:
Katerina Siniakova (CZE) bt Polona Hercog (SLO) 6-1, 6-4; Yanina Wickmayer (BEL) bt Aleksandra Krunic (SRB) 7-5, 6-7 (3), 7-5; Karolina Pliskova (CZE) bt Tsvetana Pironkova (BUL) 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (1); Danka Kovinic (MNE) bt Zhang Shuai (CHN) 6-1, 6-4; Denisa Allertova (CZE) bt Aliz Cornet (FRA x5) 3-6, 7-5, 6-2; Klara Koukalova (CZE) bt Ana Konjuh (CRO) 6-4, 2-6, 6-2; Lucie Hradecka (CZE) bt Tereza Smitkova (CZE) 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (11); Barbora Strycova (CZE) bt Elena Vesnina (RUS) 6-3, 6-3.

WTA Marrakesh Open

Results on Wednesday:
2nd rd
Kristina Mladenovic (FRA) bt Garbi Muguruza (ESP x1) 7-5 (4), 7-6 (6); Tea Babos (HUN) bt Teliana Pereira (BRA) 6-0, 6-7 (5), 6-4; Elena Svitolina (UKR x4) bt Christina McHale (USA) 7-5, 6-3; Anna Karola Schmiedlovic (SVK x7) bt Mar Irigoyen (ARG) 3-6, 6-1, 6-3; Tímea Babcsinszky (SUI) bt Tatjana Malek (GER) 7-6 (3), 6-3; Lara Arruabarrena (ESP) bt Mica Puig (PUR x8) 7-5, 6-2; Flavia Pennetta (ITA x3) bt Laura Siegemund (GER) 4-6, 6-1, 6-3; Karin Knapp (ITA) bt Roberta Vinci (ITA x6) 6-7 (3), 6-2, 6-2.