

Pacquiao loses contentious WBO title fight to Jeff Horn

By John Pye
AP Sports Writer

BRISBANE, Australia — It went all the way and ended in a contentiously bitter loss, the opposite of what Manny Pacquiao's handlers predicted for his World Boxing Organization (WBO) welterweight world title fight against Jeff Horn.

Pacquiao's long-time trainer, Freddie Roach, tipped a "short and sweet" knockout win for the 11-time world champion in the so-called 'Battle of Brisbane,' but Horn got a unanimous points decision in his first world title fight — delighting the 51,052-strong crowd.

The 38-year-old Philippines senator arrived in Brisbane a week ahead of the fight with a chartered plane carrying more than a hundred supporters and as the hot favorite to beat Horn. He left without the WBO belt.

All three judges awarded it to Horn, with Waleska Roldan scoring it 117-111 and both Chris Flores and Ramon Cerdan scoring it 115-113.

Some critics slammed it as a hometown decision, saying the statistics had Pacquiao landing twice the number of power punches as Horn.

"That's the decision of the judges. I respect that," Pacquiao was quoted as saying by broadcaster ESPN. "We have a rematch clause, so no problem."

But Pacquiao's conditioning trainer, the Los Angeles-based former Australian heavyweight, Justin Fortune, was critical of the referee and the judging.

"Manny lost the fight, but Jeff Horn looks like a pumpkin. Those scores, that card?" he said. "It should be the other way."

Fortune said Pacquiao should have taken any risk out of the equation.

"When you come into someone's backyard, you need to really do a number on them or knock them out," he said. "That's boxing. You get given a gift sometimes, you get (swindled) sometimes. But when you come to someone's house, you're supposed to mess them up, make a statement. Never leave it in the judge's hands."



Horn started strongly and won at least three of the first five rounds on all three of the judge's cards. But Pacquiao, after twice needing treatment for a cut on top of his head in the 6th and 7th rounds, appeared to dominate most of the rounds from the eighth.

He was close to finishing it in the 9th when he relentlessly pounded Horn and had him wobbling — to the point where referee Mark Nelson asked the 29-year-old former schoolteacher if he could continue — and could also have come out with the win.

Pacquiao didn't attend the formal post-fight news conference, sending a spokesman to say he was getting treated for the cuts. He also declined to do any interviews in the dressing room.

Horn was confident he was always ahead on points, and was startled after the 9th when the referee asked if he was OK to continue.

"I felt buzzed for sure, but I'm the Hornet — I've got to come back," Horn said. "I'm not a quitter. Australians aren't quitters to start with. We've showed we're winners."

"It was the battle of Brisbane, that's for sure. Absolutely unbelievable."

Co-promoter Bob Arum said it was a

"close fight. It could have gone either way."

"A couple of close rounds, but you can't argue with the result," he said. "I scored a lot of the early rounds for Jeff. Then I had Manny coming back in the middle. The 12th round, Jeff really won. If you give Manny the 11th, you have it a draw. You give Jeff the 11th, it's 7-5."

Roach had said earlier in the week that he'd think about advising Pacquiao to retire if he lost the fight, but they're already considering a rematch.

Horn can't see Pacquiao retiring any time soon.

"I'm sure he'll want to come back. It was a close decision and I'm sure he'll want to come back and prove himself," he said.

Arum said there was a clause for a rematch, but he'd give it time before talking to Pacquiao about it.

"I don't know Manny's future position. Is he going to stay in politics and not continue in boxing? I don't know, and he doesn't know," Arum said. "It's unfair to ask him now."

Pacquiao's camp had talked about a rematch with Mayweather if he got past Horn, hoping to avenge his loss on points in the 2015 megafight. That seems to be a long shot now.

BATTLE OF BRISBANE. Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines, right, and Jeff Horn of Australia, fight during their World Boxing Organization (WBO) welterweight title fight in Brisbane, Australia. Pacquiao lost to Horn in a stunning, unanimous-points decision in the bout that was billed as the "Battle of Brisbane." (AP Photo/Tertius Pickard)

Pacquiao entered the fight with a record of 59-6-2, but the last of his 38 wins by knockout was in 2009. Horn hadn't lost any of his previous 17 professional fights, but had never encountered anybody with Pacquiao's credentials.

"I take massive confidence from this fight," Horn said. "I believed in myself before, now I've climbed the Pacquiao mountain."

Roach said the quietly spoken Horn was "a little bit rougher than I thought he was. Maybe a little bit more physical."

"Like every time you come, you come out of a clinch in a headlock, something is wrong there," he said. "I don't know if the referee couldn't control that or what it was."

"But, I thought it was a pretty close fight. I thought Manny had a real good round in the ninth — I thought it was maybe a two-point round — and I just told Manny, 'give me one more of those and the fight's over,' but he just couldn't do it. We lost the decision."

Roach said he couldn't judge the fight, given how close he was.

"I hear there's a lot of people think it's controversial, think Manny won, but it went the other way and we have to live with that."

At Marawi City in the southern Philippines, where local officials organized a free public viewing to give some respite from the disastrous siege by militants, hundreds of people gathered to cheer for Pacquiao.

"Many couldn't accept the result initially, but the entertainment side of it provided a respite," Marawi crisis committee spokesman Zia Alonto Adiong told The Associated Press. "The message of courage and resiliency, I think Manny Pacquiao provided that today."

Associated Press Writer Jim Gomez contributed from Manila, the Philippines.

Kim's North Korea gains a little economically, a lot militarily

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his nuclear bombs will deter U.S. involvement in the event of another war on the Korean Peninsula. "If North Korea demonstrates its ability to strike Washington and New York ... and threatens to turn them into a sea of fire, the U.S. couldn't easily enter a war," Cheong said.

After perfecting a functioning ICBM, which could take a couple of years, Kim could push for talks to win big outside concessions in return for imposing a moratorium on nuclear and missile activities. Even so, he won't likely give up his already-developed weapons.

In the event of such talks, Kim would likely want big aid packages, the suspension of annual U.S.-South Korean military drills that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal, and the signing of a peace treaty officially ending the 1950-1953 Korean War, which would allow him to push for the withdrawal of the 28,500 American troops stationed in South Korea.

What stands in his way

Kim's dogged quest for nuclear weapons may also relate to his hunger to be seen by his people as a strong leader and to establish the same absolute power held by his father and his grandfather, national founder Kim Il Sung.

This would make it hard for him to back off.

"He cannot give up nukes because they are the core of his power," said Cho Han Bum, an analyst at South Korea's Korea Institute for National Unification.

The North Korean ICBM could be

capable of reaching Alaska, but weapons experts say the North still needs to master several more technologies before the missile will work perfectly.

When that happens, the United States might reconsider military strikes so as not to allow other rogue states think they could get their own nuclear programs if they simply hold out, Cho said.

Aside from a U.S. attack, the most painful measure against North Korea could be a Chinese suspension or drastic scaling back of its oil shipments to the North.

China sends about 500,000 tons of crude oil to North Korea, mostly for free, every year. That accounts for 80 percent to 90 percent of the North's domestic consumption, according to Cho Bong-hyun of Seoul's IBK Economic Research Institute.

It's not clear if China would suspend the shipments even if North Korea's nuclear threat becomes more dangerous. But if a suspension happened, the North's military, the backbone of Kim's rule, would suffer because it cannot effectively fly warplanes and operate tanks without oil.

That will lead to Kim's grip on power loosening, Cheong predicts.

"We can see he's so far run North Korea in a smarter way than his father because the economic conditions have improved and the military power has been bolstered," Cheong said. "But there is a high possibility that his adventurous, uncompromising attitude will eventually make things turn out badly."

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