

Pacquiao in for severe test vs. Alvarado

Written by Philip Ella Juico
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Mike Alvarado (right) lands a punch on compatriot Brandon Rios. □ (Danny Moloshok, Reuters)

(Reprinted from the Philippine Star)

If news reports are correct, Manny Pacquiao's next fight is on Sept. 14 in Macao against Mexican-American, Denver-born Mike Alvarado.

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Alvarado, 32, holds the Interim WBO junior welterweight title.

Alvarado is one half of the Alvarado-Brandon Rios rubber match.

Rios stopped Alvarado in the seventh round at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California on Oct. 13, 2012 in their first bout.

It was an action-packed and bruising fight which was close going into the seventh when Rios, a stable mate of Antonio Margarito and also under trainer Roberto Garcia, caught Alvarado with wicked shots close to the ropes.

The war waged by the two heavy-handed fighters earned the 2012 Fight of the Year distinction by *Sports Illustrated*.

Alvarado however returned the favor a few weeks ago, Saturday, March 30 when he won by unanimous decision over Rios in Las Vegas.

The return bout could be named 2013's fight of the year.

For boxing experts like Paul Magno, a former licensed official in Mexico and a close follower of the sport for more than 30 years, Alvarado-Rios II helped earn back some of the credibility that boxing has lost over the years.

Magno says, "For 12 thrilling rounds on Saturday night, March 30, (Rios) and (Alvarado) put their hearts and souls into a prizefight that left fans and media in complete awe. After the bout at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, not a single word of criticism could be found about the sport that, way too often, disappoints and flat-out frustrates its most loyal fans."

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It appears there will be a part three as Rios was reported by Nick Groke of the *Denver Post* as having told Alvarado, "I gave you a rematch. Now I deserve one. Let's do three."

Alvarado was reported to have agreed but first, both fighters were sent to an area hospital after the fight for CT scans, on orders of the Las Vegas boxing commission.

But before an Alvarado-Rios III, Alvarado has to take care of Pacquiao who's on a comeback after two consecutive losses to Timothy Bradley Jr. and Juan Manuel Marquez.

Pacquiao took on Bradley on June 9, 2012 with everything to lose and practically nothing to gain: Bradley wasn't really a popular and exciting fighter.

But Pacquiao took the fight despite his busy schedule to sustain the Pacquiao parade which seemed headed towards Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Bradley bucked the odds and won the WBO welterweight title via a very controversial split decision: two judges scoring it 115-113 for him and the other, 115-113 for Pacquiao.

Alvarado will be a totally different fighter compared to Bradley and Marquez who knocked out Pacquiao with a second to go in the sixth round in Las Vegas in December 2012.

He will also be a more relentless fighter threatening to roll over his opponent and a stronger puncher compared with Bradley and Marquez and faster than the brawler Margarito whom Pacquiao defeated on Nov. 13, 2010 at the Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Pacquiao used his hand speed and quickness to gain a unanimous decision over Margarito.

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After getting rid of the brash Margarito, Pacquiao defended his WBO welterweight title against the veteran Shane Mosley whom the former beat by unanimous decision.

It was in the undercard of the Pacquiao-Mosley that we got to see Alvarado live for the first time against Ghana's Raymond Narh.

Alvarado won by TKO in the third round to maintain an immaculate record of 30 victories.

Alvarado's fight with Breidis Prescott which was also the undercard of Pacquiao-Marquez III on Nov. 12, 2011 at MGM Grand in Las Vegas, was a totally different fight.

We again did the ringside commentary for Solar Sports and saw Alvarado being beaten in the first five rounds prompting us to predict during the coverage that the fight would not go the distance.

In round 10, however, Alvarado came to life and dropped a fading Prescott twice prompting the referee to halt the fight with about a minute left.

Alvarado was behind in all the judges' scorecards when the fight was stopped.

Alvarado (34, 1, 23 KOs) turned professional in 2004 at 24.

Twice jailed for various offenses, Alvarado is a dangerous opponent for Pacquiao.

He can engage his opponent in a brawl if needed as he did in Alvarado-Rios I, and, as can be seen in Alvarado-Rios II, he can make good use of the ring without running around like Guillermo Rigondeaux.

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Pacquiao-Alvarado will be turning point for both fighters.

Alvarado would've turned 33 while Pacquiao will be almost 35 in September.

Alvarado has been hanging around the division far too long and has absorbed so many head shots all these years.

His biggest purse has been U.S.\$650,000 and needs a breakout win.

Pacquiao is returning from a painful knockout loss and the consequences of a third consecutive defeat are too terrible to imagine.