

**WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?**  
Genealogy has never been  
so fun and easy

**JEAN KING**  
That old pair of Levi's might  
be worth a small fortune

NOVEMBER 1, 2010

AMERICAN AIRLINES - AMERICAN EAGLE

# AMERICAN WAY

7

WORLD  
CHAMPIONSHIPS



**CONGRESSMAN**

**PUGILIST**

**HUMANITARIAN**



# PACMAN

## THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR

**MANNY PACQUIAO** is the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world, but his accomplishments in the ring don't define the man

# PacMan Cometh



**ALL THROUGH THE** hotel — in the lobby, at all seven bars, on the gaming floor — a light roar gradually picked up momentum. What started out as a few rogue cheers that blended in with the already noisy MGM Grand Hotel & Casino slowly crescendoed into a cacophonous symphony of claps and hoots and whistles. In case any of the vacationers didn't know that tonight was fight night in Las Vegas, they were being made aware of it now. And just in case Bob from Sioux Falls and Jane from Topeka still didn't realize that their hotel was about to be overrun with 8,000-plus boxing fans for the main event, the horde of people draped in Mexican flags and shouting "¡El Terrible!" as loud as their larynxes could register surely tipped the tourists off.

Las Vegas is a pugilist's dream. In addition to the megacomplexes that can hold thousands of fans, there are all those diversions for before

and after the fight. And when a legend like Erik "El Terrible" Morales is on the bill, the Tijuana native is sure to draw an auditorium full of his countrymen, all of whom have no problem making the six-hour high-speed desert burn to the Strip.

I just happened to be in Sin City on a research trip: I was researching how my buddies responded to curious amounts of alcohol while in Vegas for a bachelor party. I must say, the research was going well, I think. Come to think of it, I don't remember how the research was going, but I do remember striding through the MGM Grand minutes before the bell.

If there's one thing I love more than a good research trip, it's a good boxing match. If you've talked to me before, whether on a plane or on the street, within the first 10 minutes, you know what a huge boxing fan I am. I can quote history; I can regale you with blow-by-blow accounts of the best fights. Heck, I can tell you who all the belt-holders are as well as all the contenders that you should keep an eye on. But there's one thing you may not know about me — something that my best friends don't even know. Although a huge fan of the sport, I've never once stepped foot inside the ring. I've never danced around the squared circle. I've never even laced up gloves, and no glove has ever punched me in the face. To that end, I have no nose for bloodlust. I don't like to see people in pain, and I certainly don't like the thought of someone getting injured.

Then how, you ask, could I be a prizefighting devotee? How could I possibly stomach an activity that is seemingly a celebration of all the things I dislike?

My passion can be summed up in one sentence by NPR commentator Frank Deford: "Boxing, the meanest sport, has always been forced to draw its gladiators from the ranks of the poor and the disadvantaged."

The rags-to-riches backstories of these gladiators are all too real. They're the embodiment of lives spent in grinding poverty, along all compass points around the world. They are stories of fighting for survival, fighting as a means to an end, fighting for redemption. For every El Terrible out there, there are hundreds of El Terribles-in-training,

patiently honing their skills while waiting for a chance to show their stuff on the main stage. These are life stories that, on paper, read like fiction. So when you have a fight card that highlights not one but two marquee names, the stage is set for a human drama of literary proportions.

I took a break from my research for a few hours on March 19, 2005, to catch a fight that all the pundits predicted would be a "fight of the year" candidate. El Terrible was scheduled to fight a rising star in the mythical pound-for-pound category. This man from General Santos City, Philippines, had been a champion in three other weight classes, just like the Mexican boxer he was scheduled to fight. This man, the PacMan, was as ferocious in the ring as he was compassionate outside of it. And like El Terrible, Manny Pacquiao cut his teeth in the shadows of society. Since losing Fight One in his trilogy with El Terrible on that night in 2005, PacMan has destroyed the competition, going undefeated for the next five years. In that time, he's helped his country recover from biblical floods and has been elected to congress. Rumor has it that he'll be the next president of the Philippines. But that's in the future. He has to carry the hopes and dreams of his countrymen — and of PacMan fans around the world — when he meets one of his toughest challenges in Antonio "the Tijuana Tornado" Margarito of Mexico this month.

Back then, Pacquiao may have lost that 2005 match to El Terrible, but he went on to retire the fighter in their third fight. And although he was the underdog back then, more than 70,000 fans — a U.S. boxing record, and the majority of whom will be cheering for PacMan — will pack Cowboys Stadium on Nov. 13. If you like a good nonfiction story, read our feature on page 38. If you've never watched a boxing match before, Pacquiao/Margarito is a doozy of a premiere. And if you're a fight fan like me, then Nov. 13 can't get here fast enough.

Adam Pitluk  
Editor



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