

Birth of a British champion, but can Ricky Hatton take the pressure at this level?

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Ricky Hatton's victory over Kostya Tszyu has been quite rightly described as one of the greatest fights on British soil in the last two decades, providing a master class of preparation, execution and determination.

Few commentators expected Hatton to beat a fighter of the calibre of Tszyu. The pace and intensity of Hatton's performance in the early hours of June 5th were staggering and ultimately more than the ageing Tszyu could bear. Tszyu failed to make it out of his corner for the twelve-rounds to the absolute delight of the 22,000 fans packed into the MEN Arena in Manchester. Afterwards both warriors were the epitome of sportsmanship with Hatton magnanimous in victory and Tszyu full of praise for the younger fighter

However, Hatton's win should be seen as the beginning of his journey rather than the end point. This is a journey that needs to be planned as meticulously as Hatton's preparations for the fight itself. At 26, to leave a lasting legacy and fulfil his potential he has to pick his fights well.

The most likely option hinted at by Frank Warren, Hatton's promoter, is of Hatton taking on Diego Corrales the WBC and WBO lightweight champion, in November on the same card as WBO middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe.

Welshman Calzaghe is due to fight the American IBF middleweight title-holder Jeff Lacy and has come out publicly in support of a lucrative British 'super-fight-night'. Lacy happens to have the same promoter, Gary Shaw, as Corrales with Frank Warren handily the promoter of Hatton and Calzaghe. This exposure would cement Hatton's image in the US and allow him to fight against potential contenders such as Floyd Mayweather and Arturo Gatti. The last step of Hatton's journey may be a fight against the Puerto Rican golden boy, Miguel Cotto. Cotto who is unbeaten in 24 fights would be an even more challenging prospect than Tszyu. That fight would be the defining moment of his career.

The path Hatton takes will end in either a waste of talent, or the emergence of a boxing legend. Good luck Ricky.

By Paul van der Neut - boxing club president



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