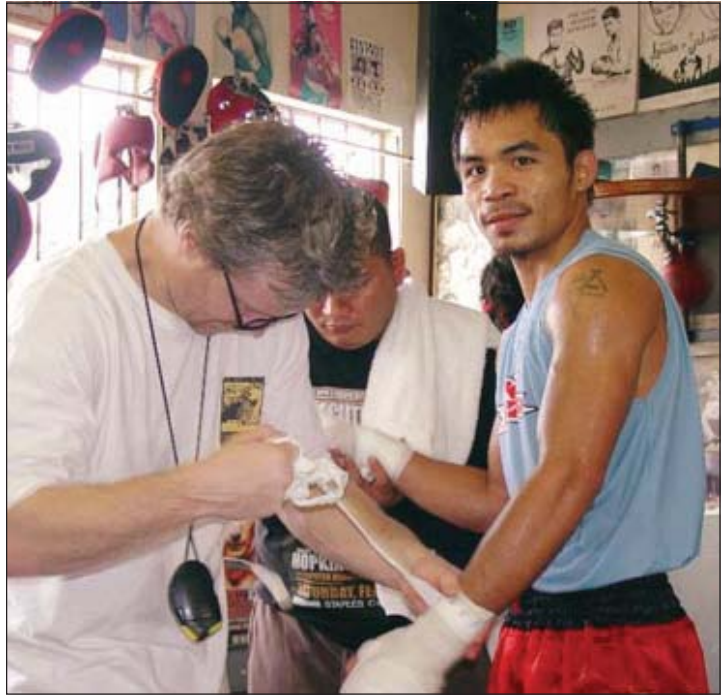


## SPORTS



MANNY Pacquiao has been training rigorously under the watchful eye of his trainer Jack Roach (left) for his March 19 showdown with Erik Morales.

## Pacquiao-Morales fight billed as a blockbuster

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—The Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales showdown at MGM Grand has been classified a blockbuster four days before its staging on Saturday, March 19.

The bout, strongly predicted to be a slugfest based on the courage and styles of the combatants, is perceived to be a “dead-end match-up.”

With the brisk demand for tickets, the event was declared a box-office success.

The demand for media accreditation has been so overwhelming that organizers had to turn down a host of regular applications.

This was taken as a gauge that Saturday's blockbuster has reached the level of popularity of Oscar de la Hoya fights, said Aimy Zophie, head media coordinator.

Morales, a native of Tijuana and a Mexican ring icon, commands a strong walk-up crowd.

But Pacquiao's startling credentials, not to mention his fiery, non-stop style, have fueled interest in the showdown.

On March 15 Pacquiao opened a minus-120 favorite. (Bettors must wager \$1.25 for each \$1 they're trying to win on Pacquiao.)

The take-back on Morales is plus-105. (Bettors win \$1.05 for each \$1 they put on Morales.)

The odds are expected to tighten, if not totally even up, with the arrival of Morales in this gaming city.

Puerto Rican cutman Lenny de Jesus, who will be in Manny Pacquiao's corner, agreed that the March 19 super bout has the makings of an Ali-Frazier classic.

But De Jesus nodded and made a thumbs-up sign when told the fight could spawn a Hagler-Hearns type of battle.

Reason: both Pacquiao and Morales are all-out action fighters.

Morales could indeed be bigger, but Pacquiao trainer Freddie Roach said he would be happier that way.

“Size won't be a problem. Morales will be bigger but slower. He will have a hard time dealing with Manny's quickness and speed.”

## Fischer must be deported to U.S., says Japan official

CHESS legend Bobby Fischer shouldn't be exempted from Japan's rule that foreigners who are ordered deported must be sent to their homeland, Japan's top immigration official said on March 15.

Fischer and his supporters are asking that he be allowed to go to Iceland, where he has been granted a special passport for foreigners, instead of the United States, where Japan has ordered him sent.

Fischer, 61, was detained in July when trying to fly out of Japan to the Philippines on his revoked U.S. passport.

The maverick genius faces 10 years in prison in the United States for playing chess in Yugoslavia in 1992 in violation of sanctions imposed over the Balkan wars. Washington, however, cannot have Fischer extradited on this charge as it is not recognized as a crime in Japan.

But the U.S. government is now moving to prosecute him for tax evasion, the Mainichi Shimbun said, quoting an unnamed official from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court clerk's office at the Robert N.C. Nix Sr. Federal Courthouse in Philadelphia.

If he was indicted, the chess legend could be extradited from Japan to the United States in line with the extradition treaty between the two countries, the Japanese daily said.

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service plans to prosecute him over five tax evasion charges, the daily said, adding that the IRS was likely to secure a grand jury indictment on Fischer, which would allow it to bring charges against him. The grand jury is set to open on April 5.

Under Japanese law, a foreigner may only be deported to a country of which he or she is a citizen unless the foreigner is recognized as refugee under international law or is exempt for other special circumstances, said Masaharu Miura, the head of the immigration bureau at Japan's Justice Ministry.

“This case is not an exception,” Miura told a parliamentary committee today.

Washington has sought Fischer—who became world chess champion in a 1972 match in Iceland against the Soviet Union's Boris Spassky—on charges of violating international sanc-



CHESS master Bobby Fischer, the maverick U.S. chess genius detained in Japan, may be extradited to the United States to face tax evasion charges in his homeland, according to a report on March 6, 2005.

tions against the former Yugoslavia by playing chess there in 1992.

Fischer has denounced the U.S. deportation order as politically motivated. He wants to renounce his U.S. citizenship and has applied to marry a Japanese chess official.

Some of Fischer's Icelandic supporters have campaigned to help him out of gratitude for putting Iceland in the global spotlight with his 1972 match against Spassky.

## Florida teen breaks 400 meter record

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark.—Keron Clement has struck down a world record held for a decade by one of the greats of track and field. And he's only 19. The Florida sophomore seemed as surprised as everyone else when he ran 44.57 seconds at the NCAA Indoor track and field championships Saturday night, breaking the mark of 44.63 set by Michael Johnson in 1995.

It was the second phenomenal clocking by a U.S. teenager in the event this season, and both came at the Randal Tyson Track Center. A month ago, 18-year-old LaShawn Merritt of East Carolina ran a 44.93 — then the third-fastest time in the event's history — at the Tyson Invitational.

But two weeks ago, Merritt signed a shoe contract with Nike and turned professional without ever running in an NCAA meet. That deprived the indoor championships of a big-time showdown, but Clement did just fine on his own.

“He's been blessed by a wonderful ability by God — he chose the right parents,” Florida coach Mike Holloway said.

## McGwire's name mentioned in steroids probe

NEW YORK (AP)—Mark McGwire's name was mentioned several times during a federal steroids investigation in the early 1990s, but he was not the target of the probe nor was any evidence collected against him, the Daily News reported March 13.

McGwire, Jose Canseco and five current players along with four baseball executives were subpoenaed to testify at a congressional hearing on steroids March 17. The commissioner's office has said it

will fight the subpoenas. Canseco says he will testify and has asked for immunity so he can answer all questions; McGwire said he'll show up in Washington.

Two dealers caught in the federal investigation told the Daily News that a California man named Curtis Wenzlaff gave Canseco and McGwire illegal anabolic steroids.

A spokesman for McGwire, Marc Altieri, told the newspaper the former player does not remember meeting Wenz-

laff.

“We're not going to comment on anything at this time,” Altieri said, “but we believe one should consider the sources of such allegations.”

Canseco said on ABC's “This Week” he met Wenzlaff in the 1980s and worked out with him but did not buy steroids from him.

When asked by the newspaper, Wenzlaff declined to comment about McGwire but said he did give Canseco ste-

roids.

“I supplied a bunch of players, but I'm not going to name any other names,” Wenzlaff told the Daily News. “Jose's different because he opened the door with his book.”

Canseco said in his recently published autobiography that he, McGwire and Giambi shot steroids together in a bathroom stall at Oakland Coliseum.

McGwire and Giambi have denied Canseco's charges.



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