

## Donaire honored by tribute

Written by Joaquin Henson  
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**Boxing superstar Nonito Donaire, Jr. (right) with his trainer Robert Garcia (left) and promoter Bob Arum.**

MANILA — WBO superbantamweight champion Nonito Donaire, Jr. said the other day it's an "enormous honor" to be even nominated as Fighter of the Year and if he's named by the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA), the recognition wouldn't be just for himself but also for the Filipino nation.

Donaire, 30, was recently named Fighter of the Year by ESPN.com but the most coveted award is given by the BWAA.

It was the BWAA that cited Manny Pacquiao as Fighter of the Year in 2006, 2008 and 2009, joining heavyweight Evander Holyfield as the only boxer ever to win solo recognition in three

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years.

Holyfield was named in 1990, 1996 and 1997.

Sugar Ray Leonard was named in 1979 and 1981 but shared the honor with four others in 1976.

Muhammad Ali was honored in 1965 and 1974 but shared the award with Joe Frazier in 1975.

Frazier was named in 1969 and 1971 but also shared the honor with Ali in 1975.

Fighters who were named twice were Dick Tiger in 1962 and 1966, Floyd Patterson in 1956 and 1960, Marvelous Marvin Hagler in 1983 and 1985, Tommy Hearns in 1980 and 1984 and Mike Tyson in 1986 and 1988.

Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather Jr. were cited only once each.

The BWAA established the Fighter of the Year award in 1938.

Last year, the awardee was Andre Ward.

The BWAA will name the 2012 Fighter of the Year next month and present the Sugar Ray Robinson trophy to the winner at the annual awards dinner in May.

At the end of every 10 years, the BWAA also names its Fighter of the Decade with Roy Jones the first awardee for the 1990s.

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Pacquiao was the second awardee for the 2000s.

Donaire was recently in Manila for a week and left last Monday to celebrate Christmas with his wife Rachel in Las Vegas where the couple just bought a new home in a gated community about 10 minutes away from the strip.

Donaire came to town alone as wife Rachel attended to the purchase of the home and a 10-week-old Cane Corso Italian breed female dog named Zena.

Celebrities who own a Cane Corso include LeBron James with two dogs, former IBF lighth heavyweight champion William Guthrie, singer Patti LaBelle, actor Tracy Morgan and former NFL player Tony Richardson.

The Donaires also own a condo unit in Las Vegas.

There is no truth to the rumor that Donaire's wife is pregnant.

Donaire earned his first \$1 million paycheck for retaining his WBO 122-pound title via a third round knockout over Jorge Arce in Houston on Dec. 15.

According to Donaire's father-in-law and chief of security Gerry Marcial, it appears the next fight is "70 percent sure" to be in Macau in March or April but no opponent has been finalized.

A probable opponent is WBA champion Guillermo Rigondeaux of Cuba.

Another option is WBC titlist Abner Mares.

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“If it’s Rigondeaux, the fight will last three or four rounds,” said Marcial.

“That guy’s been shooting his mouth off. Twice, he tried to enter the ring after Nonito beat (Wilfredo) Vazquez and (Jorge) Arce and twice, our security guys Brian Singer and Ben Kelso blocked him. It’s Nonito’s time, not his. All Rigondeaux wanted was to share the spotlight and challenge Nonito. He showed no respect for our staff. The guy fights like an Olympian, he’s slick, quick with no power and no head movement. I don’t think he’ll be able to take Nonito’s power. If the Macau fight pushes through, Nonito will train over a month in Manila then move to Macau a week before the fight.”

Marcial said Donaire’s left hand, which bled in the Vazquez and Toshiaki Nishioka bouts, held up in the recent knockout over Arce.

“While training for Arce, there was a small spot of blood in Nonito’s left hand wraps on the last day of sparring but it was nothing serious,” said Marcial.

“After the fight, there was no stain at all. Nonito’s hands were a bit swollen but that’s expected because he throws with so much impact. Luckily, doctors found no fracture or torn tissues or broken bones in his left hand even if the skin split open in between the first and second knuckles, causing the bleeding. It was just dry skin that needed to be moisturized. If the skin is dry, it’ll crack. Nonito’s been using cocoa butter lately to moisturize his hands and during sparring, he uses a padded wrap that his Japanese friend Masa Ueda sent from Tokyo. His left and right hands are fine now.”

Marcial confided that in the dressing room before the fight in Houston, Arce was almost shaking with nervousness.

“Robert (Garcia) was in Arce’s dressing room to view his hands being wrapped,” said Marcial.

“Arce was really nervous. Even when they were flyweights some years ago, Arce told Nonito if

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they ever fight, not to make it end too early. I think Arce knew all along he would get knocked out by Nonito.”

The predominantly Hispanic crowd booed Donaire during the introductions in the ring but was quiet when Arce went down in the third round, prompting referee Laurence Cole to step in to halt the carnage.

Arce was floored once in the second and twice in the third before the stoppage.

“Robert never came to Nonito’s training camp in San Carlos,” said Marcial.

“He kept in touch by phone and sent sparring partners. Nonito’s his own man. He knows what to do in the gym. Robert was with (Marcos) Maidana in Argentina for a fight then joined Nonito in Houston three days before the fight. Robert’s experience is valuable and Nonito listens to his advice in between rounds in the corner. They work well together. Robert is like Nonito’s crutch.”