

Testing issue settled: Donaire set to face Rigondeaux at Radio City

Written by Ryan Songalia
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Fil-Am boxing superstar Nonito Donaire Jr. (left) and Guillermo Rigondeaux during their press conference at B.B. King Blues Club & Grill in New York's Times Square on Feb. 21. The two will fight at Radio City Music Hall on April 13. (© Elton Lugay / The FilAm / Filipino Reporter)

Special to the Filipino Reporter

Fear not, the fight is on.

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Still, RING junior featherweight champion Nonito Donaire Jr. stuck to his promise not to move forward with the official announcement of his April 13 bout against WBA titleholder Guillermo Rigondeaux at Radio City Music Hall in New York until Rigondeaux's team presented a signed copy of their agreement to submit to random testing for performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) through the Voluntary Anti-Doping Agency (VADA).

Both fighters and their camps were present at B.B. King Blues Club & Grill in New York's Times Square, but the event was delayed for more than an hour until Rigondeaux's team signed the form before New York State Athletic Commission head Melvina Lathan.

Rigondeaux's team finally signed the papers after negotiating the option to reserve the right to do additional testing with the United States Anti-Doping Agency.

Once the event was underway, promoter Bob Arum of Top Rank announced that all results will be held in confidence by the fight camps and promoter and submitted to the New York State Athletic Commission, "who will be the only entity that has jurisdiction of what action, if any, to take, based on those reports."

"Well, [Rigondeaux's team] didn't give no phone number so we're gonna hassle for each and everyone's phone numbers," said Donaire of San Leandro, Calif. by way of Talibon, Bohol, Philippines.

"He signed it but how can you get a hold of him if there's no phone numbers? They signed the contract and they're willing to do it. It's not about that I'm doubting if he's dirty, it's more of this is what this guy [agreed to]."

Donaire, who is currently the only professional boxer to submit to random, year-round testing through VADA, says that he might even be willing to fight even if an opponent is found to be doping.

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“I believe that people who try to enhance themselves in that way should be punished in every way,” said Donaire.

“But at the same time I’m still willing to fight, I’m a fighter. I want to fight guys who are on it because it gives me a better challenge. I’m crazy like that.”

Last year, VADA changed the way people viewed state-regulated testing procedures in boxing when respected champions Andre Berto and Lamont Peterson failed tests administered by the independent agency.

Rigondeaux’s manager Gary Hyde says that they stalled in signing the agreement because they wanted to introduce a second agency to conduct tests independent of VADA.

“Nonito has been avoiding any confrontation with Rigondeaux and saying that Rigondeaux is not on his radar,” said Hyde, who has yet to consult another testing agency.

“Well I’ve got some message here for Nonito: Nonito is not on Guillermo Rigondeaux’s radar. On the 13th of April, ‘Rigo’ will be closing in on his target and he will be beating Donaire to win his titles and to enter into the top 10 pound-for-pound fighters in the world.”

The fight between Donaire (31-1, 20 knockouts) and Rigondeaux (11-0, 8 KOs) will be only the second boxing event to take place at the iconic Radio City Music Hall.

In 2000, then-pound-for-pound king Roy Jones Jr., defended his light heavyweight championship by defeating David Telesco by unanimous decision in the first boxing event at Radio City Music Hall.

Donaire admits to idolizing Roy Jones Jr., as a child.

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“I’m honored. I idolized Roy Jones growing up, it’s exciting for me and historical,” said Donaire, who is rated No. 5 by The Ring’s pound-for-pound rankings.

Donaire is also The Ring champion at 122, while Rigondeaux’s is the magazine’s No. 1 contender at that weight.

Donaire, 30, is coming off of a career-best year in 2012, moving up to 122 pounds after winning world titles at flyweight, super flyweight and bantamweight and winning four title fights.

For his efforts, Donaire was voted Fighter of the Year by the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA) and will be honored at a dinner event in New York on April 11, two nights before he fights.

Rigondeaux, 32, is now based in Miami, Fla. after defecting from Cuba in 2009.

Rigondeaux won gold medals in the bantamweight division in the 2000 and 2004 Olympics and will be reuniting with former amateur coach Pedro Diaz for this fight.

This will be the third defense of the belt Rigondeaux won by knocking out Rico Ramos last January.

This will be Donaire’s second fight in New York City, the last of which was an uneventful, one-sided decision win over previously unbeaten champ Omar Narvaez in October 2010.

Donaire says he has “unfinished business” in New York and hopes to leave an exciting impression on New York fans this time around.

“They’re saying that they’re gonna go after me, they’re gonna make it exciting, they’re gonna

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use power, pressure me and whatnot. We'll see," said Donaire.

"That's what everybody's been saying from [Vic] Darchinyan until now. I've heard it all. I'm pretty sure he'll bring more than what I expect him to."

Ryan Songalia is a member of the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA) and contributes to GMA News.

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