

Donaire next in list of Pinoy great champs?



Nonito Donaire Jr.

INTERNATIONAL Boxing Federation flyweight champion Nonito Donaire Jr. said last May 7 Manny Pacquiao is in a class of his own as a symbol of Filipino pride and his achievements will never be surpassed or duplicated in boxing history.

Donaire and wife Rachel were at ringside to witness Pacquiao's second round demolition of Ricky Hatton in Las Vegas last Saturday, May 2. Also at ringside were IBF lightweight titlist Brian Alvarado and girlfriend Erika Navarro. Donaire and Vitoria recently won by knockout in a double championship card, co-promoted by Solar Sports and Top Rank, at the Araneta Coliseum.

"There will never be another Pacquiao," said Donaire. "Manny is a product of certain situations that made him as great as he is. These situations forced him to be the fighter that has the heart to fight even though the odds are stacked against him. The legacy that Pacquiao has established is something (that) cannot be replaced or duplicated. Each fighter has his own path and destiny to bring pride and honor to the Filipino people."

Donaire, 26, was blown away by Pacquiao's display of power and speed in disposing of Hatton to become only the fifth fighter ever to capture six world titles in different divisions.

"Manny has become a more complete fighter each time he climbs into the ring—with devastating power and killer speed," he said. "Manny is also now a better tactician. Let us not negate the contributions of his great trainer Freddie Roach who sharpened and honed his student's skills to perfection."

Donaire said at this point in Pacquiao's career, he's unbeatable in his prime.

"Every time Manny enters the ring, he gets into another level than in his previous fight," continued Donaire. "I think he's unbeatable at this time. What I've learned from Manny is to have confidence in myself, no matter what the odds are against me. Nothing is impossible when you put your mind and your heart into it."

As for Pacquiao's invasion of more weight classes, Donaire said the limit may be the welterweight division.

"I think 147 pounds would be the pinnacle he can attain," said Donaire. "Beyond that, power will be a question because with his stature, he'll be fighting taller people with bigger frames and longer reach."

Donaire said he's looking forward to Pacquiao winning more fights but warned of Miguel Cotto, Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and Juan Manuel Marquez who he said "have equal chances of giving Manny a run for his money."

Donaire said he will move up to the 115-pound superflyweight division in his next fight but couldn't confirm definite plans. Top Rank chairman Bob Arum recently disclosed he is working to feature Donaire in an Aug. 22 bill at the open-air Giants

baseball stadium in San Francisco, possibly against WBO superflyweight champion Jose (Carita) Lopez of Puerto Rico. The same card may include Vitoria in a title defense or a unification grudge rematch with WBC lightweight champion Edgar Sosa.

"It hasn't been decided on who the next contender for me will be," said Donaire. "But it will be at 115 pounds. I've heard there is a tentative fight to be staged in the Bay Area, sometime in August."

On his recent fourth round knockout over previously unbeaten Raul Martinez, Donaire said, "Everyone was impressed with my display of power and speed—nobody expected an early stoppage against an undefeated fighter like Martinez, there was no one in particular that commented on my recent victory but more of an overwhelming wave of support from my fellow Filipino boxing fans who greeted me in Las Vegas."

"If God wills, I'm hoping to reach at least 130 pounds, capturing a world title in each weight," he said. "My main focus right now is taking on Fernando Montiel but ultimately my dream match would be against the great Puerto Rican fighter Juanma Lopez."

Montiel is set to face Eric Morel for the vacant WBO bantamweight title in Atlantic City on June 27. The throne was relinquished by Gerry Peñalosa when he stepped up to challenge Juanma Lopez for the WBO superbantamweight crown.

Donaire's ambitious fight path could lead to a match against Carita Lopez for the 115-pound title, Montiel or Morel for the 118-pound belt and Juanma Lopez for the 122-pound championship. If he sweeps the assignments, Donaire will join an elite cast of fighters with four world titles in as many weight classes. (Philstar.com)

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