

Donaire shows 'heart of a true fighter'

Written by L.P. PELAYO

Friday, 21 October 2011 14:19



Nonito Donaire Jr. gamely poses with his young supporters after inspiring students and staff of The Filipino School of New York and New Jersey celebrating Filipino-American History Month at the Jersey City Public Library on Oct. 17. (Photo by Robert Delacruz)

Special to the Filipino Reporter

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World bantamweight champion Nonito "The Filipino Flash" Donaire charmed and thrilled the officers and staff of the Philippine Consulate General and the Philippine Mission to the United Nations, as well as the local media, during a special reception in his honor at the Philippine Center on Fifth Avenue Wednesday, where he vowed to give his all on Saturday (Oct. 22) to defend his title against Argentina's Omar Narvaez and bring another international honor to the Philippines.

Donaire, often touted as Manny Pacquiao's heir apparent, was welcomed by Consul General Mario Lopez de Leon, Jr. and Deputy Consul General Ma. Theresa De Vega.

Among members of his entourage were his wife Rachel Donaire and trainer Robert Garcia.

In welcoming Donaire, de Leon thanked the boxing hero for bringing so much honor to the Filipinos both in the Philippines and overseas.

"Your impressive track-record as a three-division world champion and your reputation as a switch-hitter with the unique ability to fight either southpaw or orthodox have earned you legions of fans here in the United States, the Philippines and many other parts of the world," de Leon stated.

"We are really very proud of you Nonito," the consul general added.

"You are an inspiration not only to the Filipinos and Filipino athletes in the Philippines but also to the Filipino-Americans especially those who are pursuing growth. We really look forward to your continued success in reaching greater heights as you face a formidable opponent on Saturday."

Donaire, for his part, said he would do his best to defeat Narvaez saying, "that is what you'll get with 'The Filipino Flash,' which is to show pride of who I am as a Filipino fighter with all my

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heart, with all the talent that God has given me and that's one thing you will see this Saturday...the heart of a true Filipino fighter and I'm hoping that I will entertain and most of all I will wave the flag with all my pride."

De Leon presented Donaire with a coffee table book titled "Art at the Philippine Center," which features a collection of all precious paintings housed at the Philippine Center building.

The book is often gifted to ranking diplomatic officials visiting the Philippine Center.

Accepting the memento, Donaire said, "as you know I love art. I do painting and sketching. I may not be as good as these guys but I will truly enjoy work of art from the Philippines and what the Philippines has to offer."

During a Q&A with the media, Donaire said his upcoming fight would be his last as a bantamweight and he plans on moving up to super bantamweight for his next fight early in 2012.

"We have Jorge 'Travieso' Arce from Mexico, who is very talented and he's ready to go to war and he's one of the guys that I'm looking at," Donaire said, "and, of course, Toshiaki Nishioka, who just defeated Rafael Marquez. So there is a lot of excitement going on in the 122 division and a lot of challenges up ahead."

Donaire, however, said, "I don't want to look past the guy in front of us, Omar Narvaez."

When asked how he would rate himself among all-time Filipino boxing greats Donaire, replied:

"For me it's not where I stand but it's more of how I do in inspiring others because Manny Pacquiao, Flash Elorde, they all inspired me to be where I am at right now and I hope I can do the same with people. I am really bad when it comes to myself and putting myself in the pound-for-pound or putting myself in ratings with other fighters. All I know is they are great

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fighters and have done so much for our country. I'll leave it up to the people to decide where I'm at and wherever it may be I'm always blessed to know I'm part of history."

Donaire also talked about the many obstacles he hurdled — including poverty and asthma — and how he triumphed.

He also said he considers Pacquiao a "good friend" and "role model."

Donaire later signed various mementos — from pictures to boxing gloves — and posed for souvenir shots with all those who attended the reception.

"He is so warm and accommodating despite his stature," according to one Philippine Consulate staffer.

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General Maciño, Jr. (center) is surrounded by reporters and photographers during a press conference. (L.P. Pelayo)

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