

Donaire overcomes cramps to unify titles

Written by Joaquin Henson
Friday, 13 July 2012 20:57



Jeffrey Mathebula (right) is knocked back to the ropes by Nonito Donaire Jr. during the WBO and IBF superbantamweight title fight at The Home Depot Center in Carson, California on July 7. Donaire won in a unanimous decision. (Photo by Harry How/Getty Images)

MANILA — Nonito Donaire Jr. endured cramps in both legs starting the sixth round and put on a dominating performance over hapless South African Jeffrey Mathebula to unify the WBO and IBF superbantamweight titles via a unanimous decision at The Home Depot Center in Carson City, California Saturday night.

Donaire overcomes cramps to unify titles

Written by Joaquin Henson
Friday, 13 July 2012 20:57

Donaire, 29, admitted to the *Philippine Star* in an overseas phone interview shortly after the fight that he overdid his warmups and it probably caused the stiffening of his legs.

“I rushed my warmups in the dressing room when I was told to get ready sooner than I thought,” he said.

“I felt my legs go to sleep a little bit starting the sixth then it was on and off. My calves began to tighten up in the later rounds, too. I didn’t want to show I was in some kind of pain, I didn’t want to let on. That’s how it is in boxing. It was very difficult to fight someone as tall as Mathebula. I just did what I had to do to win.”

Donaire’s trainer Robert Garcia said he wasn’t worried about the cramps.

“Nonito complained about his legs in the sixth,” he said.

“Still, I thought it was a great performance. Nonito put on a show. It never looked like he had cramps out there. He did a good job taking Mathebula out of his game.”

Donaire said he dedicated the fight to the late Bruce Lee whose Filipino student Dan Inosanto, now 75, was in his entourage walking to the ring.

Inosanto was one of only three students whom Lee anointed to teach his martial art system.

Inosanto himself taught Lee’s son Brandon the finer points of kung fu fighting and also listed actors Denzel Washington, Forest Whitaker and Chuck Norris among his students.

Donaire overcomes cramps to unify titles

Written by Joaquin Henson
Friday, 13 July 2012 20:57

Entering the ring, Donaire's team wore yellow headbands with Japanese inscriptions translated to "The Filipino Flash" provided by a journalist from Japan.

It may be an indication that Donaire's next fight will be against WBC emeritus superbantamweight champion Toshiaki Nishioka who was at ringside to witness the action.

Nishioka, 35, has a 39-4-3 record, with 24 KOs, and won the WBC crown in 2008.

So far, Nishioka has repulsed six challengers in a row.

A confusing element is the WBC recognizes a second 122-pound champion, Abner Mares of Mexico.

"I think the best guy in this division whom I want to prove myself against is Nishioka," said Donaire.

"I think that Nishioka is the best of all these guys. He's proven himself and I promised I would fight him. So maybe, if everything goes well this year, I can fight him. But after Nishioka, I want to fight guys who have the belt. I've told my manager Cameron Dunkin that we want to fight all of those guys. I want to be undisputed."

Donaire's promoter Bob Arum said the unified champion's next fight will be against Nishioka or Mares or WBA titleholder Guillermo Rigondeaux of Cuba or Mexican buzzsaw Jorge Arce.

Cramps or not, Donaire was masterful in conquering "The Marvelous Mongoose" whose U.S. debut was far from impressive.

The judges had no difficulty choosing the winner.

Donaire overcomes cramps to unify titles

Written by Joaquin Henson
Friday, 13 July 2012 20:57

Jonathan Davis, a Cebu-born Filipino who relocated to the U.S. in 2008, saw it 117-110 and Steve Morrow 118-109 for Donaire.

Surprisingly, South African judge Deon Dwarté had the widest margin, 119-108, for the Filipino.

Dwarté's reputation for bias was enhanced in two blatant scoring anomalies involving countrymen in 2009.

In the fourth round, Donaire dropped Mathebula with a counter left hook to the jaw and it looked like the South African was done for the night.

He got up at the count of seven on wobbly legs and was saved by the bell. Donaire, however, couldn't finish him off in the next round.

Donaire overcomes cramps to unify titles

Written by Joaquin Henson
Friday, 13 July 2012 20:57



My friend, the author, Jim Nisley (D.P. Post-Dispatch) has (with permission of the IWB Grand Prix) written a book about the challenges of growing up in a small town in a small town.



Manny Pacquiao celebrates a unanimous decision over Jeffrey Mathebula. (Photo by [Wally Pfister](#))