

Rigondeaux shocks 'Filipino Flash': Donaire wants a rematch

Written by Ryan Songalia
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Cuban Guillermo Rigondeaux (right) punches Filipino-American Nonito Donaire Jr. during their World Boxing Organization/World Boxing Association junior featherweight title unification bout at Radio City Music Hall in New York City on April 13. (Photo by Al Bello/Getty Images)



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Will work to go up in division

Special to the Filipino Reporter

It was Nonito Donaire Jr. himself who forewarned of the dangers that could arise from a fighter achieving all of the success he had ever dreamed of.

Two nights after receiving the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA) Fighter of the Year award, Donaire found himself living out that nightmare scenario against undefeated Cuban Guillermo Rigondeaux, who frustrated and counterpunched Donaire en route to unanimous decision at Radio City Music Hall in New York on April 13.

"The Filipino Flash" Donaire (31-2, 20 knockouts) of San Leandro, Calif. had an inauspicious opening to the fight as a left cross from the two-time Olympic gold medalist Rigondeaux of Miami, Fla. by way of Cuba rocked Donaire to the ropes in round one.

Donaire, who hadn't lost since dropping a decision to Rosendo Sanchez in his second pro bout, never made adjustments, preferring instead to swing away with home run shots.

Rigondeaux (12-0, 8 KOs), who himself hadn't lost a bout in 12 years, continued to move and box, bending at the waist to make Donaire miss awkwardly at times.

With the clock running out on his long unbeaten streak, Donaire nearly pulled out a Hail Mary in round 10 as he switched to southpaw and dropped Rigondeaux on his back with a left cross.

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Rigondeaux, though clearly shaken, bounced around the ring trying to regain his leg strength before landing a counter left cross of his own late in the round to back Donaire off.

With the fight narrowing on the scorecards, both Donaire and Rigondeaux tried to close the fight strongly.

A left cross from Rigondeaux landed on Donaire's already puffy eye, causing it to swell dramatically and leaving him blind from that side for the final two minutes of the round.

After 12 rounds, all three judges scored it for Rigondeaux 114-113, 115-112 and 116-111.

Afterwards, a dejected Donaire gave all credit to the crafty Rigondeaux before voicing his intentions to rise up in weight to 126 pounds.

"The last two rounds I got stupid, I didn't really feel his power til that last round and I got too carried away," said Donaire, 30.

"I have much respect for the beautiful boxing that he gave me. We have to go back to the drawing board.

"I want to go up in the division, I was struggling to make this weight. We'd like to rematch him."

Donaire also complained about his left shoulder, which he said had been bothering him for the past three fights, and said he intends to get damaged ligaments surgically repaired.

Rigondeaux, 32, was elated after making a career-high payday of \$750,000 USD and earning

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the WBA, WBO and RING Magazine junior featherweight titles.

Donaire reportedly received over \$1 million for the fight, which was televised by HBO.

"The people that know boxing saw that it was a very good boxing fight," said Rigondeaux, when asked if he had heard the continuous chorus of boos throughout the fight.

"I made him look the way he looked which was bad, and I looked great.

"You saw it; boxing, moving, frustrating him. He's an excellent fighter and he's got a great punch, but with one shot you can't win a fight."

Bob Arum, who promotes Donaire and co-promotes Rigondeaux alongside Miami-based Caribe Promotions, said a Donaire-Rigondeaux rematch is "unlikely," while holding firm on his plans to match Donaire with former junior featherweight and featherweight titleholder Juan Manuel Lopez in the Fall.

Arum concedes that Rigondeaux is "a hard sell" due to his unorthodox, defensive approach to the sport, and was unsure of what he'd do next with the Cuban boxer.

With the loss, Donaire joins countrymen Manny Pacquiao and Brian Vitoria to suffer upset defeats in their most recent outings.

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