

Australian Paul Briggs signs with Don King

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DEERFIELD BEACH, Fla.—World Boxing Council No.1-rated 175-pound contender Paul Briggs signed a promotional agreement with Don King Productions Tuesday.

This is the first time Briggs has signed with a promoter.

“I have shunned all offers from promoters for the last three years,” Briggs said from King’s South Florida office, “because I wanted to become the No. 1 light heavyweight mandatory challenger to make sure I would be a top priority for any promoter.

“Aligning myself with the most powerful promoter in the world in Don King is a great move for me,” the Australian now living in Pomona, Calif., under the training guidance of Jack Mosley said. “I have been highly impressed with Don King and his accomplishments, but I am also impressed with his team, many of whom have been with him for decades. It says a lot about Don and his company.”

King was also enthusiastic about inking Briggs.

“I am thrilled about signing another Australian in Paul Briggs, who will join his fellow Australian Kali “Checkmate” Meehan in our DKP team of fighters,” King said. The Honorable John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, is a staunch ally of America and George Walker Bush, so I am very pleased and proud one of his countrymen, a great fighter and future world champion Paul Briggs, chose me to be his first promoter.”

Briggs, 29, boasts a professional ring record of 23-1, with 17 knockouts. He has defeated boxers ranked in the WBC top 10 in four of his last five fights. He has also been victorious in his last two appearances, both of which were world title elimination bouts.

Briggs had planned to face undisputed light heavyweight champion Antonio Tarver as Briggs is Tarver’s WBC mandatory challenger, and King had won a purse bid in Phuket, Thailand at the WBC annual convention to promote the fight.

Although it is expected that Tarver will fight Glencoffee Johnson on Dec. 18 in Los Angeles, the WBC has given Tarver until Friday to sign the contract to fight Briggs.

This is not the first time Briggs has faced losing Tarver as an opponent. Tarver defeated Montell Griffin to win the WBC and International Boxing Federation 175-pound titles, and Briggs hoped to fight him, but Tarver opted to face Roy Jones, Jr., a fight he lost in November 2003 before knocking Jones out in an immediate rematch on May 15.

“If it were me,” Briggs said, “I’d face my mandatory challenge for \$2.2 million, keep my [WBC] belt, and attempt to unify for another great payday.

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“I think he’s running from a 29-year-old power puncher to fight a 36-year-old man in Johnson.”

Briggs has had an interesting life and fighting career. He became a professional Muay Thai boxer at age 15 where fighters are allowed to use shins, knees and elbows in addition to their fists. He became a world champion in this discipline at 19, retired at 22 and returned to boxing at 24.

“I love fighting,” Briggs said. “I actually took up boxing at age 8 before pursuing Muay Thai fighting, so when I returned to boxing at age 24, I was returning to my first love.”

Interestingly, Briggs points to his one and only loss as the most important fight of his career, which came during a two-fight foray into boxing at age 17 and 20 where he won his inaugural bout and lost the second.

“I learned that if you don’t train, you get smashed,” the Aussie said.

“That loss is more important to me than the 23 victories with no defeats I’ve had since then.”