

## Boxing News: Hasim Rahman Meets the Press

Written by News Article

Thursday, 09 March 2006 19:00

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In anticipation of Saturday's heavyweight title fight between James "Lights Out" Toney and Hasim Rahman from Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall and broadcast on HBO, Lights Out met with the press via telephone conference call on the afternoon of March 7 and this is what went down.

OPERATOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Top Rank call with Hasim Rahman. At this time all lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speakers' remarks there will be a question-and-answer period. If you would like to answer a question, please press star, one, on your touchtone telephone. If you would like to withdraw your question, please press the pound key.

It is now my pleasure to turn the call over to your host, Lee Samuels. Lee you may begin.

LEE SAMUELS, TOP RANK INCORPORATED: Greetings everyone. The Rock is here, the world heavyweight champion from his training facilities in Rochester, New York. He's here and he's going to be talking about his big fight with James Toney down at Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City on HBO. Tickets are on fire. It's a very, very exciting promotion and at this time I'd like to introduce my boss, the Hall of Fame promoter, Bob Arum. Bob.

BOB ARUM, TOP RANK INCORPORATED: Thank you Lee. Welcome to the call. It's a real pleasure for me to be on this call with heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman. This is just the start. As everybody knows Top Rank recently signed a promotional agreement with Rock and we expect that he will have a magnificent fight. This one and others coming up in the heavyweight division and people will love and respect him for his great achievements to come in the ring. So I'm going to turn this over to the heavyweight champion, Hasim Rahman. Hasim:

HASIM RAHMAN: I got to say opening statement?

BOB ARUM: Yes.

HASIM RAHMAN: Well, you know, I'm just happy to be here. I'm looking forward to winning my fight with James Toney (inaudible) and making believers out of everybody who doubt me. I will win this fight and impress the (inaudible) and that's all, you know, that's what I'm going to do. I'm just going to go hey whoever Bob put in front of me I'm looking for him to give me the biggest most attractive fights out there. He ain't going to have no resistance on my part and we're going to go ahead and take over the division.

LEE SAMUELS: OK Rock. I also want to introduce Rock's manager Steve Nelson and the chief trainer is with us, Phil Torrence. Steve, why don't you start us off?

STEVE NELSON: OK Lee and obviously I know most people really want to save their questions for Rock but very briefly, you know, I've been with Rock from day one and I was there in the training camp right before he beat Lennox on that memorable night. This is the best Rock

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has ever been. You know, we were all prepared back in November to defeat Vitali Klitschko. Unfortunately that didn't happen, but we're real happy to be working again with Top Rank and, you know, Top Rank is going to be real happy when they see the results of this fight because there ain't no stopping Hasim Rahman right now. He's unbeatable and he's going to run the streak and end his career as the heavyweight champion of the world.

LEE SAMUELS: And Phil do you want to add to that because, you've been with him all this time?

PHIL TORRENCE: Yeah, like I say, this is Phil, and I've been with Rock before the Mehan fight here. I've seen a tremendous improvement in him. Improvement in Rock is his attitude, his dedication, his motivation. It's been a real gain. I think, looks like not only his boxing career but looks like his life has been (inaudible) right now and I'm just happy to be a part of Rock. And if I'm able to stay with him long enough after this championship I think that people will continue to see amazing things happening for the Rock.

LEE SAMUELS: Well we saw the images come out of media day with Rock and he looks terrific and he's ready to fight. So Jason, let's start the questions and give the instructions to all the fight press.

OPERATOR: Thank you. The floor is now open for questions. If you have a question, please press star, one, on your touchtone phone. Once again it is star, one on your phone at this time to queue up for a question.

Our first question is coming from Robert Morales of Los Angeles Daily News.

ROBERT MORALES, LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS: Hey Rock how you doing man? Listen I wanted to ask you, you know, we all know that, you know, that you went through bankruptcy court and all that. I'm wondering how much of a burden was it on you to have that fight with Klitschko cancelled?

HASIM RAHMAN: Well man it really wasn't a burden. I mean, you know, things happen for a reason. I can't really control, you know, I mean I can't make anybody get in the ring. Of course I would have loved to take out those couple (inaudible) and clean up some things. But, you know, I mean, I truly believe that nothing will be taken away from me without getting equal or better. So there's going to be my equal is better. I'm looking for bigger and better things now. You know, I can't cry over spilled milk. So I'm looking forward to, you know, just getting in there and doing like I do with James Toney and possibly, you know, fighting, you know, any other top heavyweights out there that's going to bring the most money.

ROBERT MORALES: All right. Thank you man, I appreciate it.

LEE SAMUELS: Thanks Robert.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Chuck Johnson of USA Today.

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CHUCK JONSON, USA TODAY: Yeah how you doing Hasim?

HASIM RAHMAN: What's up Chuck?

CHUCK JOHNSON: All right. I mean looking at James Toney, what particular problems does he pose for you or do you see any problems that he poses for you, aside of being a shorter man?

HASIM RAHMAN: Honestly I don't see any problem. You know, I really feel like with the way I am and my preparation there's not a heavyweight you can put in there that could pose any problems on March 18th. I honestly am not being cocky, I'm not being overconfident. I'm trying to like expose James for the fraud that he is.

CHUCK JOHNSON: You call him a fraud. In what regard do you mean that?

HASIM RAHMAN: (Inaudible)

LEE SAMUELS: Rock your phone is breaking up.

CHUCK JOHNSON: Yeah I can't hear, yeah.

HASIM RAHMAN: Can you hear me?

CHUCK JOHNSON: No. I did just then when you said can you hear me.

LEE SAMUELS: I think he ranks with Steve. Steve can hand his phone to you.

HASIM RAHMAN: How you doing Steve?

LEE SAMUELS: All right now you're good.

HASIM RAHMAN: Well I just think, you know, as a man, you know, should know how to pick his battles. You know, this is real disrespectful and I'm, you know, I treat that personally. So I'm going to deal with it on March 18. Show him that, you know, he can talk it but he can't back it up.

CHUCK JOHNSON: Right. With his body build, is it amazing or astounding to you that he's still fighting for world championships even though it seems like he's getting bigger or at least, you know, he doesn't have the muscle tone to (inaudible)?

HASIM RAHMAN: This will be his last championship fight.

CHUCK JOHNSON: Excuse me?

HASIM RAHMAN: This will be his last championship fight.

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CHUCK JOHNSON: All right. So Rock, when the historians look back at this period in heavyweight boxing, what do you think they are going to say about this period of heavyweight boxing? In other words, how do you see it right now?

HASIM RAHMAN: Well I think it's on the rise right now. You've got guys like Fishberg and Klitschko fighting each other. You've got guys like myself and James Toney fighting together and then if you can put together a string of good matches you will definitely rewrite (inaudible). As long as you put competitive matches together it's the best fight the best no matter what area. You really can't complain. It's when the best fight the worst or like anybody can get ranked number one or anybody can get ranked (inaudible). You can take your pick who you want to fight. That's where they get watered down and sloppy if you start complaining. But as long as the best of every era fight the best of every era, I don't think you're going to get any problems. The problem is, in the older days the best use to fight the best. You know, now I agree there was a lot more good people at the top but the best used to fight the best and that's where the big and the trilogies and the marquee managers came and superstars were born, when the best fight the best. Can't do nothing but grow and become a star.

CHUCK JOHNSON: So that's what you see happening right now. But earlier you said this was Toney's last championship?

HASIM RAHMAN: It is his last championship. You can stick a fork in him, he's done.

CHUCK JOHNSON: OK. All right thanks Rock, appreciate it.

HASIM RAHMAN: Thanks Chuck.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Tim Graham of Buffalo News.

TIM GRAHAM, BUFFALO NEWS: Hey Rock. Thanks again for the time you gave me there in Rochester a couple of weeks ago. There's just one question I have left over for you that I didn't ask. I wanted to just get your sense on any regrets of not being able to right Mike Tyson and just the idea of that match up, because I know that after you beat Lennox Lewis that, you know, that was something that seemed to be on automatic but then you lost in the rematch and things just kind of just never seemed to work out. What are your thoughts on that?

HASIM RAHMAN: You know, I really don't regret, you know, should of, could of, would of. You know, what I'm saying. I'm just fortunate that I got another chance to be at the top and really, you know, do my thing and have my destiny in my own hands. You know, I would be real, real, real upset if I never was in this position. I could always say well man, I was right there. You know, but I got a chance to do some big things. And Mike Tyson really hasn't retired. You know, if you put together a win or two or three, you know, I'm sure Bob can show him the (inaudible) and squeeze him in there.

TIM GRAHAM: I guess a follow-up to Bob. Now that you're working with a heavyweight now who seems to have a future beyond this fight and can, you know, as you say, you know, reign in this division for a little while, what are your thoughts on Tyson? Have you approached his

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people at all and, you know, is that anything that's even on your radar?

**BOB ARUM:** Well I imagine Bruce Trampler is very close with Tyson, they're friends. And I'm close with Shelley Pinko (ph), who's the advisor to Tyson. Yeah, I believe in making fights. I believe in making big fights and we've had a history at Top Rank of being able to do that in any division that we were concentrating on. And one of the reasons is, is we don't ask for 25 options to put a guy in. I mean, I don't believe that the title is Top Rank's title. I believe the title is Rahman's title. So our first goal is to make him the most money possible fighting the most meaningful fights. And it's not to protect us as a company, you understand, by putting him in with guys that we control or that guys that we're going to take options from, because he doesn't benefit from that. We believe, although legally that's not so, that we have a fiduciary duty to the fighters that we promote. And so, battle is sure of the fact that the public is going to get great fights in the heavyweight division and we have confidence in Rock's ability to fight any of the heavyweights that are out there.

**TIM GRAHAM:** Now, that said, is Tyson, do you think, one of those heavyweights who are still out there?

**BOB ARUM:** I think, like, you know, there's a saying in boxing, that it's about the Benjamins, and if a Rahman/Tyson fight is something that appeals to the public, which I believe it would, and there's enough Benjamins there to satisfy both fighters, I think the fight could happen. Sure, why not? Now, if the public isn't that interested and if the money isn't available to pay the fighters, then the fight won't happen. It's as simple as that. It's easy. The fighters are intelligent, we believe we're intelligent. We believe the public is more intelligent than any of us because they're not as, they don't have a vested interest the way we all do.

**TIM GRAHAM:** And just last question on this, on this subject and I'll let somebody else ask. But with Tyson, have you gotten any feedback? I know you mentioned that Bruce is close, but have you gotten any feedback whatsoever to gauge his interest?

**BOB ARUM:** Well yes and no, but the fact remains that we're concentrating on this fight with Toney. We want Rock, not only to win, but make a great, great showing and we'll take it from there. But obviously, you know, we'd be dissembling if we said that Tyson wasn't on the radar screen.

**TIM GRAHAM:** Thanks Bob. Thanks Rock, I appreciate it.

**HASIM RAHMAN:** No problem.

**OPERATOR:** Thank you. Our next question is coming from Bernard Fernandez of Philadelphia Daily News.

**BERNARD FERNANDEZ, PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS:** Hey, Rock, James Buster Douglas knocked out Tyson. He scored \$24 million for his next fight. We know that you signed with Don and, you know, the pile of money thing, which is one of the standard ploys. There was an HBO deal that might have paid you more. Any regrets maybe on your meeting at business decisions

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following the win over Lennox Lewis and maybe you could have benefited financially by doing something other than what you did?

HASIM RAHMAN: Well, like I say, I don't have regrets, you know. What I do is I've done, I accept what I've done, I (inaudible) responsibility for whatever I've done and I learned from Dave that I've got, you know, I know my history and, you know, I won't repeat my history and the negative things I've done, but, you know, if I'm in a position where I can really make my career fruitful and make better decisions. So, you know, but I don't regret anything. You know, I don't make, I don't have regrets. I just accept whatever it is and move on and try not to do, you know, the same thing. If I made a mistake then I won't repeat the mistake but I really don't have regrets.

BERNARD FERNANDEZ: I've got a question for Bob. Bob, we had a dinner in Philadelphia when you were going to do the Vitali Klitschko fight with Rock and, which didn't come off. But at that time a lot of the talk was about that you were going to be doing your first heavyweight fight in 11 years. Now that you've signed Rock, why is he not back now after an 11-year gap into the heavyweight division? Obviously you see (inaudible) the division that a lot of people might not see. I'm sure that this is the best time in heavyweight history. But why come back into the heavyweight division now?

BOB ARUM: Well I'll tell you and it's simple. We came in and we did the Klitschko/Rahman fight at first bid, really because Shelley had talked to us and convinced us it was a great fight to do and I was anxious to do it. I didn't know Rahman at all. I'd never met him. I mean, you know, I'd seen him around, maybe talked briefly to him. I liked him. You know, he was, we found him to be a very intelligent, appreciative guy, somebody that we could work with. And the reason we decided to stay in the heavyweight division was because of Rahman. Because, you know, we found him to be someone who is very personable, someone who we believe to be promotable and someone who is promotable. And that's why we're in it. I mean, that's - that if Rahman had been somebody else fighting Klitschko, who is a nasty, ornery guy, trust me, we wouldn't be in the heavyweight division.

BERNARD FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

BOB ARUM: Bernie, thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Dan Rafael with ESPN.

DAN RAFAEL, ESPN: Hey Rock how are you today?

HASIM RAHMAN: What's up Dan?

DAN RAFAEL: I want to ask you a little bit about what happened down in Mexico between you and James. I guess you guys got into a little bit of a scuffle at one of the WBC dinners. Can you talk a little bit about that? Does that in any way have any additional motivation in what happened? And could you also maybe just explain in your own words what actually went down when that occurred?

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HASIM RAHMAN: Well I came in the building, let them know the champ was here, he got upset (inaudible) so when I was walking towards him, you know, I stood by the camera where he was and he, you know, he tried to shove me like he was shoving me out the way with his forearm. So I slapped him.

DAN RAFAEL: How did you slap him?

HASIM RAHMAN: I just slapped him in his mouth.

DAN RAFAEL: OK.

HASIM RAHMAN: Or (inaudible) temper tantrum like a five-year-old, like he really wanted to do something, but was restrained by like a finger. And, you know, just gone through loud cussin', you know, just running his mouth. But I mean had he never touched me before I would never slap him. So, you know, it was, that's it, that's what happened.

DAN RAFAEL: Do you have a personal dislike for him? Because I know, you know, you're the type of guy that my experience has been, you know, you don't necessarily really hate any of your opponents, you just go in there and do your business. Is it a little different with James partly because of what happened down there?

HASIM RAHMAN: I don't like James. I mean, you see, I don't like fighters who, I mean, I don't like people who just target everybody. You know what I'm saying. If you've got a problem with somebody I can respect that. You know, if you don't like me for whatever reason, that's fine. But, I mean, you just don't go on everybody man. This man goes on everybody. He thinks it's a foregone conclusion that he's going to win every fight or he's the best or he's a very, very, cocky, arrogant person that I really, you know, I can't respect that. I can't respect the fact that he thinks there's something special about him. You know what I mean. And I'm here to show him that he don't belong in the ring with me and I'm going to show everybody who's picking James Toney he gonna get knocked out or he gonna quit on the stool and blame one of those steroid (inaudible) injuries, that's the reason for why he's quitting. Man, I'm going to punish him, I'm going to punish him.

DAN RAFAEL: Rock, would you say that of all your, let's say, recent opponents anyway, that he's the guy you dislike most? Because I can't remember another guy, you know, other promotions that you really disliked. Even like (inaudible).

HASIM RAHMAN: I just don't, I mean, but Lennox, you know, that was more of a one-time thing. I mean, going into the fight, I didn't dislike Lennox. You know what I'm saying. I really didn't dislike him. I just don't like this guy. You know, I mean, and all that's going to do is make me focus on him. I'm not mad to the point where I'm going to go in there and do something foolish or, I'm not angry. I just don't like him, you know. So, all he do is just motivate me to train harder and prepare more to give him a good whacking.

DAN RAFAEL: You were getting ready to fight Klitschko in November. I know you'd been in training camp up in Oregon for a few weeks getting ready for that and, you know, the fight was

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just a week away when it was postponed and then more or less you're right back into camp to prepare for the fight with James Toney. Is there at all an issue or question and, you know, maybe Phil could answer this too if he's still on the line, about the potential that maybe you're in such great shape that you've over trained a little bit because there was really never a break between the preparation for Klitschko and now this James Toney fight?

HASIM RAHMAN: Well, I mean, I wouldn't, I mean, judging by how I'm looking, I wouldn't say that. I really feel like I'm in the best shape that I can be in. You know, and my coach, you know, he's definitely a veteran, he knows what's going on. I mean, he understands. He don't watch. He's got a book that he goes by me. He looks at what I do and I mean, to me, I want to box the rest of the week. I want to be boxing right now, today. You know, but (inaudible) got some other things. You know, he sit there and watches me and he makes sure he get the right time and I don't over train. So, you know, I just don't see a fact of over training in this, you know. We going to be right, we ripped, ready and strong, and strong as ever and ready to let go. I mean, we're ready to fight; we're ready to put on a fight (inaudible). I'm tired of these little guys getting all the publicity and taking more money than me. I'm going to show them why the heavyweights deserve the most money. They want to see a heavyweight Costello versus Corales, that's what they're going to get. And that's what I gotta show them to give me the most money and make me the most paid fighter in the process, that's what I'm willing to do. I'm willing to do whatever I need to do to make sure I make the most money in this game.

DAN RAFAEL: How much time did you take off between the postponement or the cancellation of Klitschko and the making of this fight?

HASIM RAHMAN: Maybe a month.

DAN RAFAEL: OK. If Steve or Phil are there, could you address the prospect of just him being in training for so long since prior to the Klitschko fight?

STEVE NELSON: Phil I think you should take that.

PHIL TORRENCE: Yes I can. I think things have worked out just the way we planned. We had a break and it was timely. The break came, we took a little time off, and yet he didn't take too much time off, he just kind of maintained what he had and this thing was worked out and orchestrated the way it happened. It was a benefit to us to just kind of resume the training that he was in and we didn't lose anything. He stayed motivated. His body stayed toned up and it was a benefit for us to get right back to camp and just keep doing what we were doing at a pace that we could control and maintain it and time it correctly for this fight.

DAN RAFAEL: Let me just ask one more question then. Was part of the reason to try to keep him fresh, moving the camp from Oregon to Rochester so it wouldn't be a total boredom for all those months?

PHIL TORRENCE: We didn't just specifically (inaudible) in on that but circumstances caused us to move the camp here. It's in, the location is better for us as far as the fight here. The weather was conducive to the time here. It's winter time, we got adjusted to that. Things were

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set up for us on the West Coast here, I'm sorry, on the East Coast, and so we walked right into a very fine arrangement here, better than I had expected and it's worked out very well for us.

DAN RAFAEL: OK. Guys, thank you very much. Good luck to you Rock.

HASIM RAHMAN: All right Dan.

PHIL TORRENCE: Thanks Dan.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Lem Satterfield of the Baltimore Sun News.

LEM SATTERFIELD, THE BALTIMORE SUN NEWS: Hello Rock.

HASIM RAHMAN: What's up Lem?

LEM SATTERFIELD: As you know the rap on you or against you is your inconsistency. Which fights in your career do you feel you were at your best, or close to your best, performance wise?

HASIM RAHMAN: (Inaudible) in '98, David Tua in '98. I would say Livingstone was one, Corey Sanders, (inaudible). I would say those four probably stand out to be the best.

LEM SATTERFIELD: About the Kali/Mehan fight, maybe in terms of tactical performance, maybe even given, even though with the weight issue, the second David Tua fight, in terms of execution?

HASIM RAHMAN: I mean, yes, of course. Both of those two, I mean, I had a whole lot of fights with some guys where their names wouldn't really register, so I ain't really going to bring that up. But, I mean, I've had none that I've been prepared like this one. So, I'm looking forward to this one to be the cream of the crop.

LEM SATTERFIELD: Could you talk about the fights we just talked about? Why you think, just talk about the characteristics of those fights, why your performance was so good, the things you did that you like to do in fights and that you hope to, you know, bring to this fight?

HASIM RAHMAN: Really, you know what I'm saying, mentally and physically, if I'm ready mentally and physically, or if I feel like it's a threat in front of me for real, then I go and, I go to the well. You know, I dig down and bring out whatever I need to bring out. But if I really feel like, you know, if I analyze the fight in a little bit of an easy fight for me or it's a real easy wonderful fight for me, then maybe I might not go so far, maybe I'm like half prepared. Or I might bring (inaudible) beatable in the ring. You know, and they might see nothing really. You know, and that's where the inconsistency comes from, me analyzing the fight myself and think I'm doing just enough. So, you know, when I show up and thinking, you know, I've been lackadaisical in my preparation, it shows in the fight. It's all, it always shows in the fight. Whatever you've done in camp it's going to show in the fight. So, you know, that's been the reason, just inconsistency in training and doing things that don't really, really equate to a

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successful boxing match that easily.

LEM SATTERFIELD: When you said talk about a threat, I guess you're talking about being considered the underdog with the exception of the Kali/Mehan fight. I think in all of those fights, the Lewis one and both David Tua fights and even the Sanders fight to an extent, you were considered the underdog?

HASIM RAHMAN: Yeah, I mean, but, you know, I heard I was the underdog in the Kali/Mehan fight as well, you know. They're telling me that you know, they don't know who will win.

LEM SATTERFIELD: One other thing.

HASIM RAHMAN: It was Rock's show, that's what I heard.

LEM SATTERFIELD: One of the things that happened, I guess, after the Tua fight is, you know, during the Tue fight you were able to knock him down, which nobody else did and you were able to put some punishment on his face, like, you know, a lot of other people didn't, you know, didn't do. Is that something you're looking to do in this fight? I mean, look at the Calzaghe fight against Lacey, that was pretty bad.

HASIM RAHMAN: I'm (inaudible) I'm going to bloody him up, swell him up and punish him. I'm going to make him find a way out of there; he's going to get out of there just one way or another. You know, he can go out on his own volition or he can get carried out of there. One way he's getting out of there before 12.

LEM SATTERFIELD: Thanks a lot Rock. And, Phil, I have a question for you. One of the things you had talked about leading into the Monty Barrett fight is that you like to, you know, piece things together with Rock, add things here and there and, you know, hopefully, you know, fight the fight, you come up with a finished product. Is that still going on? I mean, what did you add from the Meehan fight to the Barrett fight and what are you hoping to add, you know, to, going into this fight? Phil?

OPERATOR: Excuse me, this is the operator. Phil has actually disconnected.

LEM SATTERFIELD: Oh, OK.

HASIM RAHMAN: You want me to answer that for him?

LEM SATTERFIELD: Sure go ahead.

HASIM RAHMAN: Well, I think that, I think you've really got to give him credit with the Barrett fight because, you know, Monty was my man. It was a fight that really was, really, really into mentally and it was like (inaudible) and if you really look at both our careers I think that fight neither one of us really fought the way we're accustomed to fighting. But from the Kali Meehan fight to this fight, if you allow me to skip the Monty fight, I think we definitely will be using a lot of combinations, a vicious body attack and, you know, just tight and fit and strong, strong jabs.

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OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Mark Abrams of 15 Rounds.Com.

MARK ABRAMS, 15 ROUNDS.COM: Hey Rock how you doing? Question, you're fighting a guy who is 5'9". When was the last time you fought a guy that small?

HASIM RAHMAN: I think I gave my son a spanking right before I left. So it'd be pretty much the same kind of thing.

MARK ABRAMS: I mean, I guess, did it not take you some time in the gym to acclimate yourself smaller sparring partners?

HASIM RAHMAN: I mean, I don't, I always keep very well against smaller guys. You know, I do well against taller guys, so, you know, smaller guy, they got it coming through, they got to come to me. You know, he can't just lay on the outside and beat me on the outside, so he got to come in. When he come in I'm going to punish him.

MARK ABRAMS: Last question...

HASIM RAHMAN: So it's like, excuse me?

MARK ABRAMS: No I'm sorry. Last question I have, lot of pointers, you know, they say when they suffer a loss they can learn a lot. You know, you went through a period of time where, you know, things didn't go your way. What, if anything, did you learn about yourself during that time?

HASIM RAHMAN: I mean, that, you know, that basically what I've been telling you all night, that if I put together a good (inaudible) and a good focus training camp, I really never really believed that there's a heavyweight that I can't beat. The problem is that when I really think that (inaudible) I'm not sure because I look at it like well on paper I can beat him so I don't really got to train hard or I don't really have to do this so I can duck this or I can duck that. I haven't ducked anything this camp. All systems is go. So I'm looking forward to putting on a dramatic victory.

BOB ARUM: Maybe just two more questions. Then he has to go train, he's been great.

LEE SAMUELS: Jason, let's take two more. Mark thank you for your questions.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Leo Roth of Rochester Democrat Chronicle.

LEO ROTH, ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT CHRONICLE: Hey, yeah, this is for Bob. Bob, maybe you touched on this earlier, but it just seems to the, I'm not talking about the avid boxing fan, but for the average sports fan, which, you know, you do have to latch in to make a mega fight. It seems that the champ that can (inaudible) today, can walk down the street and kind of not be noticed. So what's convinced you that Rock is the kind of personality that people can latch onto until say Joe Mesi got back on his feet, supposedly? I mean, we know Rock and he

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is a great, he's a great guy and he's a great guy out of the ring. Do you think people just don't know who this guy is because he didn't capitalize on the Lennox victory?

BOB ABRUM: Let me be clear. I don't know about, you know, capitalizing and not capitalizing. But, you know, I'm not a neophyte in this business. Tomorrow will mark the 40th year that I've been in this bus, in the boxing promotion business. My first fight was March 8, '66, so I know, only based on experience, who's promotable and who isn't promotable. And Hasim Rahman is eminently promotable and believe me, if he does his part, as I believe he will, in the ring, we'll do our part and he ain't walking down any street without people not knowing who he is, believe me. He has a great personality. You know you can see when the answers of the questions how intelligent he is. He can be a major, major sports star. And I believe he will.

LEO ROTH: Great, that's what I needed, thank you.

LEE SAMUELS: Thanks Leo.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Our next question is coming from Sonny Means of WVON Radio.

SONNY MEANS, WVON RADIO: Hi Rock, how are you?

HASIM RAHMAN: I'm good, I'm good.

SONNY MEANS: (Inaudible) how many years now?

HASIM RAHMAN: Been a long time.

SONNY MEANS: Remember Sunny, had good times together.

HASIM RAHMAN: Yes, absolutely.

SONNY MEANS: Absolutely and I'll be talking to you in a moment Bob. But Rock, first of all when you were in Chicago last, you cited the fact that your personality changed somewhat in terms of going into the ring after you lost to Lennox Lewis. You kind of got the big head and you didn't really get into it like you should have. So can we say that you have changed back to what you were when you fought Lennox Lewis first half and would you like to fight him again, someone coming out of retirement if you can get him out?

HASIM RAHMAN: Oh yeah, I'm hungry as a little bull wolf right now. I definitely feel like, you know, I'm focused, I'm ready. I've got a lot of people that believe in me, that went to bat for me. You know, I'm going to make (inaudible) look like a (inaudible) that like pure genius because, you know, I'm going to win this fight, I'm going to win this fight. (Inaudible) I mean, that people could have had and people could have, you know, did the right thing by us, but it shows otherwise. So now, you know, I'm just going to show everybody. I'm going to punish everybody and Top Rank will receive all the residuals from me and I'm going to get them from them. I feel like it's a perfect marriage and we're going to do big things in the next couple years.

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SONNY MEANS: All right, and one other thing. The question was asked before about likeability and people recognizing. A lot of folks in Chicago recognize Rock and they talk about it, when you coming back this way again? My next question would be to Bob Arum, my long-time friend, Bob Arum. Bob, one of the things that happened back in the past when Rock became the champion before, was the fact that it was a (inaudible) promotional-wise, that he was being promoted by one person then he jumped to another person. (Inaudible) one person complained that he went to Don King. Your contract with him, is there any threat of that happening in this stake, in this case?

BOB ARUM: It's not an exact question of a threat or not a threat. The truth is that unless the fighter is happy with the promoter it ain't gonna work. And Rock and I, I think, have an understanding and Steve has been a dear friend of mine for many years and I think this is going to be a real happy marriage and I'm not concerned because contracts don't bite, you know that.

SONNY MEANS: Yes. And, you know, you did so many fights here in Chicago. Can we expect that you may bring a championship, a heavyweight championship back to Chicago yourself?

BOB ARUM: I love Chicago. You know, and as you say, Sonny, I've been in so many fights over the years in Chicago. As a matter of fact, you know, the first fight I was supposed to do, 40 years ago.

SONNY MEANS: Absolutely.

BOB ARUM: Ali and Tyrell, was supposed to be in Chicago and that's when Ali, boy, I've got nothing against the Vietcong and the old Mayor Daily threw us out. I don't know if you're old enough to remember that?

SONNY MEANS: Oh yes, I remember that.

BOB ARUM: Right. And so, you know, I'd love to come back with the champion and do it again in Chicago. We had Tillis and Weaver fought there and Marvin Haggler fought in Chicago. There were a lot of great fights in Chicago.

SONNY MEANS: All right Bob, lots of luck for you guys.

BOB ARUM: Thank you Sonny.

LEE SAMUELS: OK. That's the last question Bob. And let's talk about fight week and I know we'll be in New York City, I believe, on Tuesday of fight week at the Copacabana.

BOB ARUM: Right. Yeah, everybody, welcome to the Big Apple; Tuesday before the fight we'll do the press conference. On Tuesday both fighters will be there and then people can go there, the fighters are going to go to Atlantic City and some of the journalists won't go until Thursday, but we're going to have something every day for you to write about, to chew on. The weigh-in is going to be on Thursday because the heavyweight. We're very, very excited. It's

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going to be a great event and I'm happy that HBO is able to put this event on television for their subscribers with no additional fee. In other words not a pay per view event. This is an event that if you have HBO you can watch it without any additional charge and I think that's great for boxing.

LEE SAMUELS: Yeah Bob, I think, I also think on HBO I think it's an open weekend. I think it's everyone in the country will look at this fight.

BOB ARUM: That's good. And you know April 22, Chris Byrd fights Vladimir Klitschko, another great heavyweight fight. So, heavyweight division is alive and well and thank you all for participating in this call. Thank you champ, Rock, Hasim Rahman, you were great on the call. Thank you Steve and see you all next week.

LEE SAMUELS: Thank you. And the fight is on HBO and it's free preview weekend. That's Rahman versus Toney March 18 at Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City. We'll see everyone in New York at the Copacabana, Tuesday at 10:30 and Rock will be weighing in with Toney on Thursday at 2:00 p.m. at Atlantic City.

Thanks everyone. We're very, very excited. We're back in the heavyweight business and thanks for participating. Thanks Rock.

HASIM RAHMAN: Thank you.

OPERATOR: Thank you. This does conclude today's conference. You may disconnect all lines at this time and have a great day.