

## No Title At Stake For Gamboa-Ponce, No Big Deal...FOLSTAD

Written by Rick Folstad

Wednesday, 31 August 2011 13:03

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There's no title belt riding on this fight. No world championship ring, no parades marching through town, no sanctioning bodies waiting to be stroked and paid.

Instead, it's just a simple fight between maybe the best featherweight in the world and one of the best featherweights in the world. And that's all any of us could ask for.

Belts? Today, they seldom define a career. The sanctioning bodies have become the Elmer Fudds of the fight game, bungling cartoon characters who always seem to draw a laugh and a shake of the head.

Yuriorkis Gamboa is the guy who might be the best featherweight in the world. He's undefeated with 16 knockouts in 20 fights. He used to own a couple of those title belts until the craziness kicked in. He had both a WBA and an IBF title belt stuffed away somewhere in the back of his closet. Or at least that's where they should have been put. But then, within a couple months, both belts were gone, though Gamboa didn't lose a fight during that time.

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The IBF took their belt back saying Gamboa missed a mandatory re-weighin for his fight in March against Jorge Solis, who he stopped in the fourth round.

The WBA took their belt back because, well, because they're the WBA. I'm still not sure why they took their belt back, but I don't think Gamboa, a Cuban refugee who now lives in South Florida, was too happy about it.

"I feel sad that they took the belt away from me," Gamboa said on a conference call earlier this week promoting his fight with Daniel Ponce de Leon on Sept. 10 at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall on HBO's Championship Boxing. "When I fought Solis, I had the belt. Now I don't have a belt. Now it is not about the belt. It is to see who is the best out there."

Maybe that's the way it should always be.

Asked what might have happened to the elusive title belt, promoter Bob Arum said the WBC basically took their ball and went home when they didn't get their way. "They said he didn't pay the sanctioning fee," Arum said. "This whole thing is getting to be nonsense, these sanctioning bodies. Who can waste time following it all? They all do everything for their own business. Not one of them, with the exception of the IBF and maybe the WBO, are businesses. So they thought it was in their best business interest to take the title away? So who is going to waste time going to court to fight it?"

I'm not accustomed to agreeing with anything Arum says, but he's right on track when he takes a swing at the alphabet gangs. The best thing you can say about most of the sanctioning bodies is that they've become very easy to ignore. We can do it anytime we want to.

What counts now is what takes place in the ring on Sept. 10 when Gamboa puts his undefeated record and his reputation on the line against de Leon, a Mexican fighter with an impressive record (41-3, 34 KOs) and a sour taste in his mouth.

Ponce de Leon is coming off a tough loss to Adrien Broner in March. He claims he did enough to win the fight.

"Everybody saw the fight," he said. "I took it and everybody saw the result except the judges."

Funny how judges will do that sometimes. If Gamboa and Ponce de Leon don't like each other, they hid it pretty well during the conference call.

"I know it's a very important fight and that's why I took it," Ponce de Leon said. "I take challenges. I love challenges. I took Gamboa because he is the best in the division, the most dangerous fighter in the division. But I feel very good. I feel very comfortable and I've trained very hard. I'm going in there to win."

Gamboa wasn't quite as talkative as Ponce de Leon.

"I think (Ponce de Leon) is a very good fighter," he said. "A very good boxer. But I'm not here to

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really talk about the fight. I am going to show it on Sept. 10 in the ring.”

What Gamboa did say is that he feels like he’s ready to fight at 126, 130 or even 135 pounds.

“I will fight at any of those weights,” he said. “I just want the big fights. They have sent me three Mexican boxers and you have seen the results. I have always come out on top.”

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