

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 21 December 2011 16:39



There will be a boxing card promoted by Lou DiBella unfolding at the theater at Madison Square Garden on Saturday, March 17, for St. Patrick's Day. Irishman Matthew Macklin will be fighting on the show, this we know. What we do not know is who he will be fighting.

Chances are better than good his foe will be Sergio Martinez, who was in NYC Tuesday to do some charitable outreach and attend a press gathering put together by DiBella to talk about that march 17 date.

DiBella Fumes At Arum-Martinez-Chavez Jr.-Rubio-WBC Situation...WOODS

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But Martinez is involved in some sanctioning body silliness, so things are up in the air as of today. Lest I risk your eyes glazing over, let me boil this down semi-quickly. Martinez became the WBC middleweight champion when he beat champ Kelly Pavlik in April 2010, but when he chose last March not to fight the man the WBC said was his mandatory challenger, interim WBC champ Sebastian Zbik, he gave up the belt. The WBC named him champion emeritus, which is has a nice ring to it, but comes with no real clear definition. (Not to mention, emeritus typically refers to someone who is retired, but is still honored with the title they held while active...Martinez has never retired.)

Then, Zbik fought Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., and the winner of that bout was to be named WBC middleweight champion. Chavez beat Zbik in June, and now wears the WBC belt. Martinez would very much like to take that belt back, and one might think, as the champion emeritus, he would be in the position to have some say in when he'd like the opportunity to try and do that. Martinez has an open date, on March 17, and he and DiBella invited Chavez to put up the belt on that date. The WBC put their stamp of approval on that plan, as at their convention in Vegas last week, they said that Chavez Jr. must put that belt on the line in his next fight, against Martinez, by March 2012. If he didn't, the WBC said, the belt would be vacated. (Why wouldn't it simply revert back to Martinez? Seems logical, right? Well, logic and sanctioning bodies are very often at odds.)

At the press gathering, DiBella said he knows for sure that Chavez Jr. has already made arrangements to fight Marco Antonio Rubio, the No. 1 ranked challenger in the WBC rankings, on Feb. 4. That fight has already been reported, but not officially announced by Top Rank, Chavez Junior's promoter. DiBella said that is because Top Rank is waiting for the New York-based promoter to announce the Martinez-Macklin bout, so they can go to the WBC, and convince them to ignore the directive made at their convention. That would give the WBC the cover, the thinking goes, to allow Chavez to hold on to the belt.

Eyes glazed over yet?

DiBella cited an article which ran Monday by Steve Kim of Maxboxing.com, in which Top Rank chief Bob Arum indicated that he'd be going ahead with the Chavez Jr.-Rubio fight, and made it clear he was confident he could and would work around the WBC directive. The promoter fumed that Arum's game of chess would cost Martinez and him money, and protested that Arum was being "dishonorable" with this move. He also took a shot at HBO, which would be televising the Chavez Jr.-Rubio bout, as well as Martinez-Macklin. "If I had Chavez, they wouldn't be protecting him," DiBella said. But, DiBella said, Arum receives special treatment because he owns leverage, in the form of his relationship with Manny Pacquiao, as Pacquiao's promoter.

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HBO-PPV has done all but one of Pacquiao's high profile fights.

Top Rank VP Carl Moretti weighed in, tongue planted in cheek a tad, when he emailed me, after I asked for comment on the whole matter, ""Don't you media members and fans get it....Sergio Martinez is not only the greatest middleweight of our time....he's the greatest middleweight ever! Forget Hagler, Monzon, Robinson....he's the greatest middleweight ever. His wins over Darren Barker & Dzinziruk prove that....don't they?"

The door was left open by DiBella for all to be smoothed over. "We want to fight Chavez next , we have a March 17 date, if we need a different date we can work it out."

If that doesn't happen, Dibella said he is counting on the WBC standing firm, and demanding Chavez Jr. fight Martinez next. He said he thinks that Martinez and Macklin if they tangle will be vying for the WBC middleweight belt. In the Kim piece, Arum sounded like a man who didn't think the WBC would hold firm, so if Lou is waiting for the WBC to be true to their public stance of last week, he may be waiting in vain.

More chips need to fall in this matter before we get clarity. We do know that there will be a St. Paddy's show at MSG, featuring Macklin, and Andy Lee.

And I do know that I would like to see everyman Macklin get a shot at a crown but would be happier to see if young gun Chavez Jr., the son of the legend, can handle the man regarded as the top second, third or fourth boxer on the planet, Martinez, in NY.

You can argue that Chavez Jr. is young, just 25, but heck, Martinez didn't look like an ace in his last fight, against Darren Barker on Oct. 1. The rumor mill says he had a severe leg injury a few weeks before the bout, which limited his mobility, but maybe that is a result of physical deterioration. If Chavez Jr. does fight Martinez and lose, well, he lost to a pound for pound standout. No real harm in that. And I think he has a 35% chance of beating Martinez, whose best days might be past him. If I have a vote, which I don't, I'd like to see Chavez and Martinez at MSG on St. Paddy's day. But I think it's more likely that Martinez fights Macklin, and the winner meets the Chavez Jr.-Rubio winner.

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Readers, how do you see this playing out?

[Comment on this article](#)

miguel1 says:

I would like to see Martinez get a high profile fight like Chavez. Top Rank's shill wants to put down Dziziruk and Sergio's recent opponents, but they won't work with DiBella to give him anyone with a name.

Dziziruk vs Sebastian Zbik might be a good fight. Zbik is one of Chavez' recent opponents, it's not like he is Hagler either....

alm11 says:

what a joke? How can any one in Chavez's camp discredit any one's opponent, let alone sergio martinez, cintron(when he was still considered dangerous) williams, pavlik, williams all back to back

chavez has fought a bunch of club fighters and fought tooth and nail wil zbik , martinez is knocking guys out