NEW YORK – When did Larry Merchant get a promoter's license?

In the midst of a makeshift post-fight press conference at ringside Saturday night, Sergio

Martinez's bombastic promoter Lou DiBella was expounding on what might be next for the best middleweight in the world when Merchant wandered over and began to tell any media member who would listen how Martinez should move up to 168 pounds and challenge one of the best super middleweights in the world – IBF champion Lucian Bute or WBA/WBC champion Andre Ward.

Despite the best efforts of Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum, this is still America, so Merchant can say what he wants but what was he doing interjecting his promotional opinion at the same time Martinez's actual promoter was trying to express his?

Beyond that, for a guy who so often insists on telling Floyd Mayweather, Jr. that he must fight Manny Pacquiao to legitimize himself completely why hasn't Merchant demanded the same of the most protected champion in boxing – HBO creation Julio Cesar Chavez, Jr.?

That is a far more logical fight for Martinez, who is an undersized middleweight who could more easily make 154 than 168 and is willing to go all the way down to 150 for a shot at Mayweather. It is also one Chavez should have been forced into a long time ago.

The truth is Chavez is no more the WBC middleweight champion or any middleweight champion than Larry Merchant is. Martinez is that champion and, frankly, the only champion worthy of a belt at 160 pounds.

So why aren't Merchant and HBO demanding that promoter Bob Arum stop building a fortress around Chavez, which he pays for with HBO rights fees, to avoid Martinez instead of having Merchant suggesting Martinez move up to 168 when he can't even get to 160 pounds eating steak and potatoes on the day of the weigh in?

More to the point, why does HBO have one standard for a champion like Mayweather but quite

another for a champion like Chavez?

Why does Merchant consistently cite Mayweather as the main cause of the long absent Pacquiao fight even though Arum and Pacquiao are, at the least of it, equally responsible for the logjam there... but expresses no such outrage at Chavez consistently ducking Martinez while his network funds fights for Chavez against journeymen like Peter Manfredo, Jr. and Martin Murray?

Ask new HBO Sports boss Ken Hershman, who is livid at DiBella for publicly criticizing a promotional network that talks like a promoter, acts like a promoter but, lo and behold, doesn't have a promoter's license, and doesn't seem to have a problem with one of his announcers being in business with Chavez's trainer (Jim Lampley was executive producer of the highly successful and quite well done documentary "On Freddie Roach'' that recently aired on HBO and for which Roach also received a producer's credit) while another publicly pushes for one fighter – Martinez - to move up in weight while ignoring the fact his more logical challenger – Chavez – has ducked him time and again.

Chavez has ridden first his father's reputation and good name and now Arum's promotional power, which is rooted in Pacquiao's success, to big money fights on HBO while the far more talented Martinez is still chasing him. Such is the seedy business of boxing but why do DiBella and Martinez have to witness an HBO broadcaster conducting the equivalent of a rival ringside press conference on how they should conduct their business at the same time they're trying to expound on the same subject?

The bottom line in all this is perhaps Hershman should ask his newest paid advisor, attorney and former boxing journalist Thomas Hauser, if anyone working for his network has a promoter's license and if so why?

"It's horsebleep that HBO suggests he move up to fight Bute or (Andre) Ward,'' DiBella bellowed at ringside at The Theatre at Madison Square Garden. "My guy isn't even a real middleweight. He was eating steak and a baked potato the day of the weigh-in and still was only

157.

"He's really a 154-pounder and they want him to move up instead of insisting Chavez do what he should have done already and face him? Sergio's knocking out everyone at middleweight and he's not even a middleweight. His only disadvantage is that he's not a true middleweight. So he's got to spot guys weight until he gets knocked out? He's not going to do that. Why don't they just tell him to move up and fight (heavyweight champion Wladimir) Klitschko while they're at it?''
The way things are going at HBO these days maybe they will. Or then again maybe Hershman will stand up and tell Bob Arum the only Chavez fight he'll be buying any time soon is the one Larry Merchant should have been pushing for – the one against the real middleweight champion, Sergio Martinez.

And oh, by the way, that's the only fight Julio Cesar Chavez, Sr. would have wanted if someone was trying to strap a "silver champion'' belt around his waist when he knew someone named Sergio was the real gold standard in the middleweight division.

Comment on this article

rizzle says:

People need to realize that nobody wants a piece of Sergio at 154lbs, and that Martinez needs to clean out the 158lbs division first, coz there are plenty of cats in the middle weight that are more than capable to give a good challange to Sergio imo. also, i do believe he should fight super middle weights, there is such a thing as catch weight fights, but who am i to say what he should or shouldnt do? its just an opinion, and Larry Merchant can say whatever he wants as long as its just an opion, the old man cracks me up, but hey its entertaining the things Larry says, thats just imo..

deepwater says:

Larry speaks for the fans (kellerman does also) Come on Borges. dibella is crying his fighter isnt even a real middleweight? lol. whose fault is that. If he is a pound for pound fighter his fighter wouldnt cry about 8 lbs.martinez is good not great. hey borges since you brought politics into this boxing article do you agree with all of obamas wars? i mean he has all of bushes wars going on and started a bunch more. So I suppose obama is more bush then bush was. Pay attention to inflation instead of silly nonsense and understand the rise in gas prices has nothing to do with supply and demand it has to do with currency devaluation.meaning the federal gov is

having the federal reserve print money making all current money less valuable.when you go to the grocery store remember this comment and do some research instead of acting silly

Radam G says:

It is all about da moola. That is the bottomline of hurt biz. It is only nature for Larry Merchant to promote the BIG MONEY fight between Money May and Pera Pac. Money! Money! Money! On all, that paper puts da whammy. Wanting this bout badly also is even Uncle Sammy. Hehehehe! You guys know that. Uncle Sam incourages anything that will give him a big CUT. Holla!

leon30001 says:

heheh...Borges you have embarassed yourself there, friend. America is NOT America anymore. Didn't you notice? Google NDAA. Educate yourself. Obama is a trojan horse, and he is bringing your country DOWN. It's not about left and right...that's for the simple-minded. Oh and did you notice? Obama launches wars [I]moins[/I] congressional approval. Get wit da program, [I]playa![/I]

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shhhh..... your not allowed to mention ndaa.obama signed it on new years eve for a reason.

ultimoshogun says:

I agree its sink or swim time for Chavez Jr. Leading into this past weekends Martinez fight I saw a headline about Chavez and Martinez's camps entering negotiations this monday if Martinez one. Now, I don't know whatever happened there cuz next i'm reading about Martinez wanting to fight Floyd and Jr. scheduled to fight Martin Murry...Soooo, now that the Murry fight is off maybe they can make the Martinez/Chavez fight happen...this wishful thinking of course.