

Vazquez-Shafikov Tops HBO2 Card Feb. 22

Written by The Sweet Science
Tuesday, 11 February 2014 22:57



MIGUEL VAZQUEZ vs. DENIS SHAFIKOV WORLD LIGHTWEIGHT TITLE RUMBLE

and

THE RETURN OF CHINESE ICON ZOU SHIMING HIGHLIGHT "RING OF GOLD"

Saturday, February 22 on HBO2® From the Cotai Arena at The Venetian Macao

Olympic Gold Medalists Ryōta Murata and Egor Mekhontsev

Featured on Non-Televised Undercard

MACAU, CHINA (February 11, 2014) -- The Year of the Horse will get off to a galloping start when world championship boxing makes its 2014 debut at The

[Venetian](#)
[® Macao's Cotai Arena](#)

International Boxing Federation (IBF) world lightweight champion

MIGUEL "Titere" VAZQUEZ,

of Mexico, and two-time Chinese Olympic gold medalist

[ZOU SHIMING](#)

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headline "Ring of Gold,"

[Saturday, February 22](#)

. Vazquez will defend his title against undefeated top-rated contender

[DENIS "Ghengis Khan" SHAFIKOV](#)

,
of Russia, and Shiming will risk his undefeated record in an eight-round flyweight bout against the young seasoned

YOKTHONG KOKIETGYM

of Thailand. Both fights will be televised on

[HBO2](#)

,
beginning at

5:00 p.m. ET/PT.

Promoted by Top Rank®, in association with Tecate, the "Ring of Gold" HBO2 telecast will feature **Fran Charles** handling the blow-by-blow while former world champion **Ray "Boom**

Boom" Mancini

and Hall of Famer

Larry Merchant

will add expert analysis and commentary.

Remaining tickets for *Ring of Gold* can be purchased via [Cotai Ticketing](#) ; prices start at HKD/MOP 80, with ferry and hotel packages also available.

Rounding out the troika of 2012 Olympic gold medalists will be [RY ŌTA MURATA](#) and [EGO R MEKHONTSEV](#)

, from Japan and Russia, respectively, in separate bouts on the non-televised undercard. It is exceptional for so many Olympic gold medalists to be featured on the same boxing card. The "Ring of Gold" undercard will also feature former world champion and current No. 2-rated contender

AKIFUMI "Sugar" SHIMODA

of Japan, in a 12-round World Boxing Organization (WBO) International featherweight title bout against fellow former world champion

MARVIN SONSONA

of the Philippines, and undefeated Hong Kong super flyweight sensation

REX TSO

in a 10-round rumble with

MAKO MATSUYAMA

of Japan, with the World Boxing Council (WBC) Asian super flyweight and the WBO Asia Pacific

junior bantamweight titles at stake.

Vazquez (33-3, 13 KOs), of Guadalajara, México, captured the IBF lightweight title in 2010 when he won a 12-round unanimous decision over Jihoon Kim. Since winning the world title, Vazquez has successfully defended it five times during his four-year reign. Vazquez will be facing undefeated top-rated contender Shafikov (33-0-1, 17 KOs), from Chelyabinsk, Russia. A southpaw with an aggressive style, good skills and movement, the former European junior welterweight champion Shafikov has good punching power and is not afraid to use it.

Zou (3-0), from Guizhou, China, and trained by Hall of Famer [Freddie Roach](#), won his professional debut on April 6, 2013, via a dominant four-round unanimous decision over gritty Eleazar Valenzuela. He followed that up with six-round unanimous decision victories over Jesus Ortega and Juan Toscano on July 27 and November 24, respectively, last year, and all at CotaiArena. One of the most popular Olympic athletes in China, Zou was the world's greatest light flyweight, capturing gold medals in the World Amateur Championships in 2005, 2007 and 2011, along with gold medals in the 2008 and 2012 Summer Olympic Games. He also owns an Olympic bronze medal from the 2004 games, making him his nation's first Olympic medallist in boxing as well as its first boxing gold medallist in the World Amateur Championships and the Olympics. He will be graduating to an eight-round bout when he faces Kokietygym (14-3, 10 KOs), of Roi-Et, Thailand. The vastly more experienced Thai enters this fight having won six of his last seven bouts, with two of those victories coming by way of knockout.

Murata (2-0, 2 KOs), from Tokyo, a sensational prospect at 160 pounds, captured the Olympic gold medal in the middleweight division at the 2012 Olympics held in London. It was the first gold medal won by a Japanese boxer since Takao Sakurai in 1964, and also is the first-ever boxing medal in a weight class other than bantamweight or flyweight. The six-foot Murata also became the 100th gold medalist in Japanese Olympic history. He made his pro debut last August, knocking out OPBF middleweight champion Akio Shibata (21-7-1) in the second round. Murata followed up that victory on December 6 with a fourth-round stoppage of David Peterson (13-1). He will be facing battle-tested slugger and one-time world title challenger **Carlos Nascimento** (2 8-3, 22 KOs), of Sao Paulo, Brazil, who enters this fight having won 12 of his previous 14 bouts, nine by way of knockout. Their fight is schedule for eight rounds at middleweight.

Mekhortsev (1-0, 1 KO), of Asbest, Russia, won his pro debut on December 4, knocking out Peter Cajigas in the third round. Trained by his father Leonid, Mekhortsev captured the Olympic light heavyweight gold medal at the 2012 summer games and as a heavyweight he won gold at the 2009 World Amateur Championships and the 2010 and 1008 European Amateur

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Championships. He'll be battling fellow undefeated prospect **Jaritram Atthaporn** (3-0, 1 KO), of Bangkok, in a six-round light heavyweight bout.

Shimoda (28-3-2, 12 KOs), of Tokyo, captured the World Boxing Association (WBA) super bantamweight title in 2011, dethroning defending champion Ryol Li Lee via a unanimous decision aided by three knockdowns. Shimoda's title reign was short-lived, losing his first title defense, to Rico Ramos, six months later. He immediately moved up to featherweight and enters this fight riding a two-year unbeaten streak. Sonsona (17-1-1, 14 KOs), of General Santos City, Philippines, captured the WBO junior bantamweight title in 2009, winning a decisive unanimous decision over defending champion Jose "Carita" Lopez. Sonsona lost the title in his first defense on the scale coming in two pounds over the division limit, against Alejandro Hernandez, though the official decision was a draw. After losing to Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. in 2010 a battle for the vacant WBO junior featherweight title, Sonsona returned to the winner's circle and enters this fight on a two-year winning streak with his last two victories coming by way of knockout.

Tso (8-0, 5 KOs), is the Pride of Hong Kong. This will mark his third time fighting at Cotai Arena where he has begun to develop a very big following. In his last bout, on the undercard of the Manny Pacquiao vs. Brandon Rios event last November, Tso scored a first-round knockout of Susu Sithjadaeng. Tso will be facing Mako Matsuyama (7-7-1, 3 KOs) of Tokyo, who enters this fight having won a unanimous decision victory over Masatoshi Nakamura last November. They will be facing each other in a 10-round bout for Tso's WBC Asian super flyweight title and the vacant WBO Asia Pacific junior bantamweight title.

The undercard will also feature local favorite, **"The Macao Kid" KUOK KUN NG** (2-0), from Macao, China, who will be in a six-round super featherweight and a four-round super welterweight bout, respectively.

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the Roast says:

I'll tune in just to hear Larry Merchant.