



VANES MARTIROSYAN VS. JERMELL CHARLO & GARY RUSSELL JR. CONFERENCE CALL TRANSCRIPT

Kelly Swanson

Thank you, operator. Thanks, everyone, for calling in. We have a great call this morning and this afternoon actually here on the East Coast to talk about the March 28 SHOWTIME show, CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING Show, featuring Jhonny Gonzalez, Gary Russell, Jr. and Jermell Charlo against Vanes Martirosyan. We have all the fighters joining us today on the call. We will start with Jermell and Vanes. But, before we get to the fighters, I'd like to introduce Chris DeBlasio, Vice President of Communications for SHOWTIME Sports to fill you in a little bit about the fight. Chris?

Chris DeBlasio

Thanks so much, Kelly. I just want to take a quick moment to thank the fighters for being on this call, thank the press for being here, and just say on behalf of Stephen Espinoza, the EVP and General Manager for SHOWTIME Sports, and all of us at SHOWTIME, we're really excited to get back into it with a nice live SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING event this Saturday. As you may have seen in the boxing press, it was about two weeks ago that we announced the addition of a new platform called SHOWTIME Boxing International. The first fight will be this Saturday, March 28; it's an international fight on the SHOWTIME network live to our subscribers. So, the first instance is a nice way to kick off our Saturday March 28 boxing coverage, and that's gonna be the Kell Brook versus Jo Jo Dan IBF Welterweight World Championship fight that's taking place in Sheffield, England. SHOWTIME is going to carry that fight live at 6:15 Eastern, 3:15 Pacific. And then, we will take a break during the afternoon hours and then go live at 10 p.m ET./7 p.m. PT SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING event with Jermell Charlo, Vanes Martirosyan, Jhonny Gonzalez and Gary Russell. So, it's sort of a two- part platform on Saturday with three live fights coming to you, which we're really excited about. And we appreciate the opportunity to be in business with the guys on the phone here today. So, without anything further, let's get it started. We welcome you guys.

Kelly Swanson

Okay. And one quick note -- or rather, media, one quick note -- we have just sent out the Fight Week Media Schedule, so please look for that in your inboxes, and it will give you the details of what is going on this week for the fight. Thank you. Okay, let's go ahead and open it up. Actually, let me go ahead and introduce the two guys that are on the call right now. They want to say a couple words. First, we have Vanes Martirosyan. He's a world-ranked 154 pound contender. Vanes, you want to say a couple words, tell us how training is going and how you're getting ready for the fight?

Vanes Martirosyan

Training is going great, everything is going good. We can't wait to fight. You know, I'm sure everybody says that before they fight, but we really are ready to go. We just can't wait to go.

Kelly Swanson

Okay, great. Thanks so much. And where are you training?

V. Martirosyan

I'm training here in California at Main Event Sports Club. There's been a couple of locations we've been training, but the major has been Main Event Sports Club, which the media will be at today.

K. Swanson

Now, I'm going to move to Jermell Charlo. He's an undefeated super welterweight contender. Jermell why don't you tell us a little bit about what's happening in your training camp and how you're feeling heading into the fight.

Jermell Charlo

Training's been great. Every time I step in the ring, every time I get ready for a fight, I feel like just there's never been a time where I repeat myself or do something the same. I've been learning from all my past mistakes. Every win I'm still learning

from. So, training camp has been good. Trainer Ronnie Shields, Danny Arnold. I opened my own gym, so I get a little late night extra hours in when I want to. And, I want to fight with my twin brother. We're pushing to fight. I can't wait to fight. Just like Vanes, he's hungry, he's ready. I'm I'm ready.

Q

Given both of your positions, as considered as top 10 contenders in the 154 pound weight class, in your mind, do you consider this an elimination fight? Vanes, what are your thoughts about that?

V. Martirosyan

I think every fight right now at this point in my career and Jermell's career should be considered a title fight. It is -- I think it is -- an eliminator fight. I'm looking at this as a championship fight. Jermell is tougher than any of the champions, so to me, this is a championship fight, and that's what we got ready for. And it should be an eliminator fight. I don't know if it is or not, but that's how we're taking it as, and we're taking this as a world title fight.

Q

Jermell, your thoughts on that - is it an official eliminator or a de facto one?

J. Charlo

Same thing with me. I feel that this is a tough fight. Every fight is a fight for my life. And I step in the ring and make sure that I fight with that on the back of my mind. Vanes is a great fighter -- grew up with him. I know what I bring to the table. And this fight is a fight for manhood, it's a fight to show who the real tycoon of the sport is in the 154 pound weight division. There's a lot at stake, so it's more than a title fight to me.

Q

Jermell, did you say that you grew up with him a little bit?

J. Charlo

Yeah, I grew up with him, at least two or three years with Vanes, you know, and his family, his people, you know? So, I know -- we know each other well.

Q

Have you guys ever sparred with each other?

J. Charlo

Yeah, we've sparred with each other several times.

Q

How often, would you say? And how long ago?

J. Charlo

I can't really say how often. I know it was back when we were a little bit younger. I was younger, still a little boy growing up into a man. So, right now, I don't even think about how it was, what it was about, or how training was when we were training together. Wasn't even 19 -- I was 17, 16, 17, 18, I mean, those ages. Here, we face each other because we're both at the top, and that's what happens when you're in the same division. Never had anything personal or different to say about him. It's just work.

Q

Vanes, you feel the same way about your times in the ring with him?

V. Martirosyan

Yeah, I remember when we used to train. It was good training. We were always in competition -- me, him and his brother. We used to go running at Memorial Park every day, and we'd try to see who'd finish the lap first. It was always competition between us -- running and training or what-not. But it was nothing but love and I respect him, his father, and his trainer, Ronnie Shields. They've been good people to me. But Saturday night, he's going to be my enemy in the ring. For now, outside the ring, I respect everybody. Once we step in the ring, it's a totally different story.

Q

Your fight that took place in October was a big win for you against Willie Nelson. You harnessed a lot of the emotion going into that fight because it had taken place just after your promoter Dan Goossen had passed away and you had his brother Joe in your corner. It was a lot of heavy emotion that night, and you really came through in a big way that night. Is it gonna be difficult in any way to sort of get that same emotion behind you?

V. Martirosyan

No, because at that fight, we had to forget about a lot of things. Dan passed away. We were all sad, and we didn't know what to do. And we actually thought -- 'should we fight' or I don't know if Joe (Goossen's) going to be there. I didn't know what was going on. There was too much emotion going into that fight. We kind of got away from the fight a little bit. But we used it as motivation for our fight. This fight to me is big. When I lost to Andrade, I didn't step into the ring 100 percent, and when I came home -- when you come home a loser, it's a bad feeling. I can't look at my wife, my kids. I feel like I let them down. So, right now, I'm just in that mode where I'd rather die than see that again.

Q

If you were to win this fight, obviously, you'd be in position for a major world title fight. Are you comfortable with waiting for one of those, figuring those fighters only fight maybe twice a year, or would you want to stay active and take more fights between them?

J. Charlo

You know, winning this fight to me -- a world title would be ideal. A world title is important. I want to fight for a world title. I want the world title. That's every boxer's dream and envision whenever they're young. Fighting for the world title matters and all this extra stuff, but if I'm here building my name and building my brand, that's just as important. Being a household name throughout the World Boxing Council, everything. That matters to me.

V. Martirosyan

The fight, this fight -- I'd say like a lot of the champions that are champions right now in our weight class, most of them just run their mouth, starting with Andrade. A fight like this for me and Jermell, it's such a big fight for me, you know, but it's not only for us. I mean, it's for the fans. The fans are in, and it's great. I mean, you rarely get to see contenders like me and Jermell wanting to step up and fight each other. You know, usually, people will get up to the rankings like we are, they just want to just talk a lot of bad stuff about the champions to get the world title fight. But, you know, you rarely get to see contenders like that, you know, No. 1 and No. 2 fighting each other when, you know they really want to fight each other and they both said yes to the fight. So, it's a big fight, but I feel like, you know, we're all gonna be -- we're gonna do our best, and I feel like the fans are gonna be the winners for this fight.

K Swanson

Okay, great. You guys, I think that was your last question, and so we appreciate you taking the time out of your training. And Vanes, we look forward to seeing you later for your open workout. And, Jermell, we will see you in Las Vegas later this week.

J. Charlo

No problem. See you, guys.

V. Martirosyan - Thank you. Take care.

Kelly Swanson

We're going to switch the call over to Gary Russell, Jr.

K. Swanson

Gary Russell, Jr. will be facing Jhonny Gonzalez for Gonzalez's 126 pound title, the WBC Featherweight World Championship. Gary, if you want to tell us a little bit about how training is going, your anticipation to be fighting Jhonny Gonzalez for this world title and what you think about the whole fight in general?

Gary Russell Jr.

We had a great training camp. Everything has been perfect, no excuses, no cutting corners. We're 120 percent ready for this fight. We can't wait be able to call ourself the new WBC World Champion.

K. Swanson

Are you doing anything in camp in preparation for this that's different from your other fights?

G. Russell Jr.

No, we're not doing anything that's different in preparation for any of the fights. I think the only difference is, depending on the fight, you want to prepare depending on the opponent that you're competing against. So, I think the only difference is the difference in sparring. You want to bring in guys that have a similar style to who it is you're gonna be competing against etc. That's the only change that we've made so far. Besides that -- basic fundamentals, ring generalship, hand speed, punching power, strength and conditioning, all of that stuff is the same.

Q

Gary, were you surprised to get another shot at the title?

G. Russell, Jr.

No, I'm not surprised. I got the same Al Haymon Promotions, just Al Haymon in general when it comes to that. He's my manager, and we know that he did everything in his power to try to make things happen for us, and give us another shot at a world title. I'm extremely grateful and thankful for this opportunity.

Q

When you fought the fight against Lomachenko for one of the titles, do you take anything out of that defeat? Whether it's the experience, or being on that level of the stage that you bring towards this next championship opportunity?

G. Russell Jr.

Of course. One of the main things that we took out of it is, if it's not broke, don't fix it. In that particular fight with Lomachenko, we did a lot of things completely different in that fight that we normally wouldn't do. We brought other people in. We let other people take the reigns and be in control of our conditioning. We've seen the outcome of that and the side effects of it. We don't take losses easy, by far. So we're back on pace. We have the same team around us that have been here from the beginning of my career all the way up until now. We had the same team way back in motion. We're ready, we're focused, we're determined, we're driven and we're just looking to give a good show.

Q

Do you see Gonzalez as a much better fighter than Lomachenko, or perhaps a bit of a more vulnerable fighter than Lomachenko or similar? How do you stack up the two title holders?

G. Russell Jr.

They're two very different fighters. Lomachenko has a little bit more hand speed than Jhonny Gonzalez. Gonzalez is more of a puncher. Jhonny Gonzalez is more of a dangerous fighter than Lomachenko just because of his punching ability and just him being a seasoned professional, being able to get all these rounds in as a professional. Lomachenko definitely is a good fighter. We take every fight serious. You take no one for granted. We definitely said, oh, this is a dangerous fight taking with Jhonny Gonzalez, but we feel as though what we bring to the table will be superior in the end.

Q

What specifically did you do differently to prepare for Lomachenko that you wish you hadn't?

G. Russell, Jr.

We brought someone in for our strength and conditioning. We've known our strength and conditioning was completely different. Even when it came to the way that we cut weight, it was different. Leading up to the fight, we were in a sauna for the past two, maybe three days leading all the way up into the fight. That's what my strength and conditioning coach wanted me to do.

Anyone that's seen that fight, whether it was Lomachenko or anyone else, they've seen the difference in my punching ability, my endurance, my speed, just me as a person. People knew that that wasn't the Gary Russell, Jr. that they'd seen the previous 24 fights. And that was some of the things that came up in the Lomachenko fight. I was completely tired and fatigued in the first round, you know?

Q

About Jhonny Gonzalez -- he obviously is a guy who is a volume puncher, he's not afraid to stand in and trade. How does this fight work to your advantage if he does fight a typical Gonzalez fight in your mind?

G. Russell, Jr.

I don't think that he's going to be able to deal with, once again, my speed. I think we'll be able to do it with my speed. He's always been slow in the speed. Even though he's been a puncher, a lot of punchers have to really sit to actually apply these punches efficiently. I think he lacks the ring generalship as far as the footwork goes that he would need -- the foot quickness. And a lot of his shots are a little wide. So, I'll be about to outpunch him and be able to punch him between his shots.

Q

What did you think of the decision in the Lomachenko fight?

G. Russell Jr.

I didn't think anything of it. The only thing that registered in my mind was the fact that I didn't have the ability to perform the way that I normally would have. I never really looked at a decision. I never looked at how the referee was going about the fight or any of these things. The only thing that came to my mind was the fact that I just lost my first professional fight, and I sort of saw the reason why I lost -- it was because I wasn't able to do what it was that I normally do.

Q

So, you feel that you lost the fight then?

G. Russell Jr.

Certainly. I'd definitely say that I lost the fight.

Q

You touched on Al Haymon earlier. Can you explain what his impact is in your career? And we've all seen the moves that he's been making. How is that gonna help you moving forward?

G. Russell, Jr.

I feel as though the fire is under these managers and promoters. There's a team effort. You'll be able to tell your manager or your promoter, 'Hey, this is my game plan, this is what it is that I want to accomplish this year.' I wanted to at least be able to contend for a world title. I want to have maybe four fights this year, maybe six fights this year, etc. Your manager and promoter, where they come in at, they should be able to meet you halfway with their game plan. If you want to have six fights within a year, etc., your manager and promoter should be able to get it done for you. We feel as though that Al Haymon is very efficient in doing exactly what it is that we want from him. It's about who you know, I guess.

Q

Heading into this fight, do you feel like you have to give a certain quality of fight to really make fans relate to you and make you a household name? Now that there's so many platforms for boxing, do you feel like there's added pressure to put on an exciting fight, or do you feel like you can still just, methodically box and gain fans from that?

G. Russell Jr.

I honestly don't feel as though that we have to do anything out of the ordinary. You're going to see the typical Gary Russell, Jr. that you've seen the previous 24 fights -- hand speed, punching ability, ring generalship and etc. A lot of fighters get caught up in the hype, and they feel as though they have to do things a little more to win the fans over, etc. That's never one of my things. I'm always to be exciting without being reckless. And I'm going to do what it is that I'm comfortable doing.

K. Swanson

Okay, Gary, thank you so much for being available to answer those questions, and we appreciate you taking the time out of your busy day, and we look forward to seeing you fight this Saturday, March 28, at the Pearl at the Palms Casino Resort in Las Vegas and live on SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING. Thanks, Gary.

* * *

Tickets for the live event are priced at \$200, \$100, \$75, \$50, and \$25, plus applicable fees are on sale now. Tickets may be purchased by calling Ticketmaster at (800) 745-3000 or by clicking [HERE](#). Tickets are also available online at www.ticketmaster.com.

Gonzalez vs. Russell takes place at The Pearl at Palms Casino Resort in Las Vegas and will air on SHOWTIME (10 p.m. ET/7 p.m. PT). In the co-main event, Jermell Charlo takes on Vanes Martirosyan in super welterweight action. The SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING telecast will also be available in Spanish via secondary audio programming (SAP).

For more information, visit www.sports.sho.com, follow on Twitter at @SHOSports, @jhonnygbox, @mrgaryrusselljr, @TwinCharlo, @LouDiBella and @PearlAtPalms, follow the conversation using #GonzalezRussell, become a fan on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SHOBoxing or visit the SHOWTIME Boxing Blog at <http://theboxingblog.sho.com>.

CONTACTS:

Kelly Swanson/Lisa Milner, Swanson Communications: (202) 783-5500
Chris DeBlasio, Showtime Networks Inc.: (212) 708-1633
Matt Donovan, Showtime Networks Inc.: (212) 708-1663
Flo Jocou, Showtime Networks Inc.: (212) 708-7319
John Beyrooty/Jared Kaufer, BZA/Showtime: (562) 233-7477/(818) 621-1111
Kevin Rooney Jr., DiBella Entertainment: (212) 947-2577
Alissa Kelly, PR Plus/The Pearl: (702) 696-1999
Alex Acuna, Palms Casino Resort: (702) 942-7777
Credentials: www.magnamedia.com