



## Gary Russell Jr. vs. Oscar Escandon Final Press Conference Quotes & Photos



**Featherweight World Championship Showdown Headlines  
SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING This Saturday, May 20  
from MGM National Harbor in Maryland**

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**NATIONAL HARBOR** (May 18, 2017) - Featherweight world champion **Gary Russell Jr.** and top challenger **Oscar Escandon** went face-to-face Thursday at the final press conference before they square-off in the main event of SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING this Saturday, May 20 from MGM National Harbor in Maryland.

Also in attendance at Thursday's press conference and competing in action on SHOWTIME were super middleweight contenders **Andre Dirrell** and **Jose Uzcategui**, who battle for the IBF Super Middleweight World Championship, plus two-division world champion **Rances Barthelemy** and former title challenger **Kiryl Relikh**, who meet in a 140-pound title eliminator. The telecast begins at 6 p.m. ET/3 p.m. PT with Gervonta Davis putting his IBF Jr. Lightweight Title on the line against Liam Walsh from Copper Box Arena in London.

Tickets for the live event at MGM National Harbor, promoted by TGB Promotions, are priced at \$200, \$150, \$100 and \$50, and are now on sale. To purchase tickets go to <http://mgmnationalharbor.com/>.

Russell Jr. was joined by his brothers, 2016 U.S. Olympian **Gary Antuanne Russell** and unbeaten prospect **Gary Antonio Russell**, as the trio of brothers look to pick up a hat trick of victories in their hometown Saturday night and on the birthday of their father and trainer, Gary Russell Sr.

Here is what the participants had to say Thursday from MGM National Harbor:

### **GARY RUSSELL JR.**

"I never magnify an event, even though it's at home. The end objective is still the same. But I think it's cool that everyone in our neighborhood has the opportunity to be in the arena and see what we do.

"I'm 100 percent physically and mentally ready for the challenge and I'm on top of everything I can be.

"When you get caught up in the hype, it's a deficiency in yourself. You have to be able to focus on the objective over everything else.

"I believe in my ability but also the ability of my brothers. So I'm not nervous for them. I know what they've been taught. They conduct themselves like young men in and out of the ring.

"I want a unification bout after this. I'm ready for any of the other world champions. We can line them all up in the same night if you want. If I can't get those fights, I'm going to move up in weight and bully around these bigger guys.

"I look at each fighter as their own individual. We don't prepare the same way for every opponent. He's a tough fighter who comes forward. He's very physical and I expect him to be at his best on Saturday. It's up to me to counteract what he does.

"I love this sport. I love what I do. I love being able to prepare for no one else, but the person across the ring and then dismantling him.

"We worked on versatility most. We believe in the sweet science. A lot of these guys just win because they're stronger and faster. We want to be more technically sound too."

### **OSCAR ESCANDON**

"This is a very important fight for my career. This is going to elevate me to where I want to be and give me the platform to do anything in the sport. I'm very well prepared for this.

"I feel strong and healthy at 126-pounds. I'm focused on this fight Saturday night. I'll fight anyone but right now I have to get past Gary Russell Jr.

"In my last fight I was the underdog. People counted me out. Same thing applies here. I've done the work and I'm confident that I'm going to win.

"I didn't have complete training camps with my past trainers, but now I'm with Ruben Guerrero. I'm learning so much. You can look at me in my previous fights and you'll see a vast improvement now.

"I want that green (WBC) belt a lot. Green is my favorite color. I want to be the best and to me, winning that title signifies that I am the best. To do that I have to beat the best, and that is Gary Russell Jr.

"I don't like to talk much but I will say that I'm coming to bring this world title back to Colombia. I respect Gary but my mindset is that I'm taking this title home."

## **ANDRE DIRRELL**

"It's been a long hard journey for me. But I've always managed to climb back on top. The hard work that I've put in will make Saturday night easy work.

"My opponent is a fantastic fighter. If anyone should be in line for a title it's this guy. He has the the power and he has the skill. I just believe he's up against a better and tougher opponent.

"I'm going to get in the ring and display all of my abilities. I'm very confident and ready. It's time for Andre to get on top and stay on top.

"I've been out of the ring for a while but most importantly, I've stayed in the gym in training the whole time. I've kept positive mentally as well. Everything is going upward right now and I'm going to take advantage.

"Uzcategui has everything a world champion needs to get to that title, but he's facing a more skilled competitor on May 20. He's deserving of the opportunity and that's why I trained so hard for this fight.

"The title means the world to me. We fight for the titles first. We're all coming from the amateurs where we got trophies. My love will always be here with the sport until the day I retire."

## **JOSE UZCATEGUI**

"You won't want to miss any of these fights on Saturday night. It's a great card and I'm planning to steal the show.

"I like when my opponent talks a lot. None of the stuff my opponent says can help him in the ring. It's just me, him and our fists.

"It's a lot of responsibility to be the top contender for the belt. I have to make it clear that we deserve this so that I can move on to bigger and better things.

"People are going to get to see my power on display Saturday night, but also my other skills. I can do it all in the ring and I'm going to prove it.

"After this I want to take on James DeGale and Gilberto Ramirez. I'm coming to clean out this whole division and be undisputed. It starts on Saturday."

## **RANCES BARTHELEMY**

"I'm living a dream right now that I myself never in a million years imagined. Every time I get to speak with my mother in Cuba, I tell her of this dream that I am currently living and how it is still surreal to me. To be able to fight on these big cards in the U.S. after the long journey, after all the setbacks, I could not be any more grateful.

"Being a world champion in two different weight divisions is something still unreal to me after people doubted whether I would even become a world champion one day. But this journey does not stop here for me. I have the urge to keep on going, make history for my people, and fight the big names in boxing.

"Everyone in my team supports and motivates each other because we know we as Cubans have to work twice as hard as everybody else. There is an unfair representation of Cuban boxers among the press and fans here in America. We are misconstrued as being boring fighters therefore we are determined to erase that stigma and prove to everyone that we can brawl and put on a good show just as much as we can box.

"I have been working on some new and different things to add to my arsenal this training camp. My whole team has been incredible and pushed me every day.

"Don't miss this fight on Saturday night. It's going to be eventful and exciting. I'm coming to get a spectacular win."

### **KIRYL RELIKH**

"I'm very happy to be here and be a part of this great show. I will do my best to give a great fight on Saturday.

"Camp was perfect. I have a great team and I'm ready for anything. We worked hard and it's going to be a great performance.

"I'm ready for any style that that Rances Barthelemy can bring into the ring. We thought that we got the win in Scotland against Ricky Burns, but it is very hard to win on points on the road.

"I always fight in different countries so this is just another one on my list. It's normal for me. I'm very ready for the challenge and I'm expecting a great fight.

"I hope that people like my style. I'm going to entertain the fans and get a victory over Rances Barthelemy on Saturday night."

### **GARY ANTUANNE RUSSELL**

"I get to pick up right where I left off after the Olympics. I'm fighting on the same night with my brothers for the first time in so long. It was one of my first amateur fights when we last did it.

"I'm feeling really good. We're making a statement and we're making history. What's not to be excited about?

"Mentally and emotionally the Olympics really helped me for the pros. You have to develop over time. We're constantly training and sharpening our tools. This is a different stage, that's all.

"I hope everyone is ready for Saturday night. There were some mishaps at the Olympics. Life is going to throw you bumps to get over, and that's what I'm going to do. Everyone better keep their eyes open Saturday, because it might be quick."

### **GARY ANTONIO RUSSELL**

"I'm really excited about this fight and competing alongside my brothers. It feels good to come home and fight. My family and friends will be in the building.

"I can't wait to get in the ring and show what we've been working so hard on. All the hours in the gym with my dad and brothers is going to pay off on fight night.

"I've seen some video of my opponent. I know his weaknesses and strengths. We're going to come exploit it on fight night."

### **GARY RUSSELL SR., Father and Trainer of the Russells**

"We work hard in the gym. Everybody has a plan until they get hit. We know that he's going to bring pressure and we'll be ready for it.

"I'm really happy about this opportunity. We can get it all done in one night and put on a great show for everyone.

"I'm definitely in fight mode. There are no extra nerves at all. I just want to get this done and get it done right.

"I can't really put Escandon in the same category with the top guys we've faced. He's a short fighter. Most people in these weight classes are taller than Gary. At that size, the only way you can fight is straight forward. He's not going to out box us."

### **RUBEN GUERRERO, Escandon's Trainer**

"We're ready over here. We're going to do what it takes. We know what we're up against. He's one of the best. We'll prove who is the best on Saturday. This is going to come down to a war. Gary knows what he's going against.

"I helped Escandon set up a camp in Las Vegas for this fight because this was a huge opportunity. We were up in the mountains and that's where I wanted him. He's going to be great on fight night. He'll be ready to go. It's not easy to train in Vegas.

"We're coming to win. We can't control the judges but we know they're fair. We're expecting a fair shake. We're going to control what we can."

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### **ABOUT RUSSELL JR. vs. ESCANDON**

**Gary Russell Jr. vs. Oscar Escandon** is a featherweight world championship showdown that headlines SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING on Saturday, May 20 from MGM National Harbor in Maryland. Televised coverage begins on SHOWTIME at 6 p.m. ET/3 p.m. PT and features super middleweight contenders Andre Dirrell and Jose Uzcategui in a matchup for the Interim IBF Super Middleweight World Championship plus two-division world champion Rances Barthelemy in a WBA 140-pound world title eliminator against Kiryl Relikh. In the telecast opener, from Copper Box Arena in London, Gervonta Davis puts his IBF Jr. Lightweight Title on the line against Liam Walsh.

For more information, follow on Twitter @MrGaryRussellJr, @TGBPromotions, @MGMNatlHarbor and @Swanson\_Comm or become a fan on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/SHOBoxing](http://www.Facebook.com/SHOBoxing) and [www.Facebook.com/MGMNationalHarbor](http://www.Facebook.com/MGMNationalHarbor). The event is sponsored by Corona Extra, La Cerveza Mas Fina.

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