

## Rances Barthelemy Training Camp Quotes & Photos



**Two-Division World Champion Battles Kiryl Relikh in 140-Pound Title Eliminator on SHOWTIME Saturday, May 20 From MGM National Harbor in Maryland**

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Premier Boxing Champions

**NATIONAL HARBOR, MD** (May 10, 2017) - Cuban star **Rances Barthelemy** will look to take one step closer to becoming the first Cuban fighter to win world titles in three weight classes when he battles **Kiryl Relikh** in a WBA 140-pound title eliminator on Saturday, May 20 on SHOWTIME from MGM National Harbor in Maryland.

Televised coverage begins on SHOWTIME at 6 p.m. ET/3 p.m. PT and is headlined by WBC Featherweight World Champion **Gary Russell Jr.** defending his title against top challenger **Oscar Escandon** plus super middleweight contenders **Andre Dirrell** and **Jose Uzcategui** in a matchup for the Interim IBF Super Middleweight World Championship. In the telecast opener, from Copper Box Arena in London, Gervonta Davis defends his IBF 130-pound world championship against Liam Walsh.

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/>.

Already a champion at 130 and 135-pounds, a victory over the former title challenger Relikh will put Barthelemy in the mandatory position to face unified 140-pound champion Julius Indongo and do something that no fighter has done in the rich history of Cuban boxing.

Here is what Barthelemy had to say from training camp in Las Vegas:

**1) How is training camp going? How have you benefitted from sparring and training alongside of your brother Leduan and Yordenis Ugas and have their recent performances been an indication of how you expect to perform?**

"Training camp is going really well. Training alongside of my brother and Yordenis under the tutelage of Ismael Salas is the best thing that could happen in my career. They keep me focused and motivated to get better every day. Yordenis and I have been helping each other during our camps, he's an Olympic athlete so having him to train with is really beneficial. We have a new strength and conditioning coach as well who has us in the best shape possible. I know May 20 you guys will see the best Rances Barthelemy yet."

**2) What would it mean to you to become the first three-division world champion from Cuba?**

"It would mean the world to me, after all that it took to defect from Cuba, the near death experiences, the imprisonments, leaving my loved ones behind, it would all have been worth it. I want to inspire the youth that come after me as well, let them know to never give up on their dreams no matter the conditions you live in or what the naysayers may say. Me winning a third world title and making history for a Cuban would prove that."

**3) What did you take away from Relikh's loss to Ricky Burns?**

"I didn't get to watch the fight but watched the highlights and it seemed like a very entertaining fight. People were saying that it probably should have gone the other way even, so it seems like he put on a good performance."

**4) How would you characterize Relikh's style and how do you see this fight playing out?**

"He likes to come forward a lot and attack. I'm prepared for that if that's what he plans to do come fight night but I also anticipate having to make adjustments. I always prepare to adjust to whatever my opponent brings. Being a cerebral fighter is a skill that has helped me succeed inside the ring."

**5) Can you address your 11-month layoff and how your training has been geared towards shaking off any ring rust you may have?**

"There will be no ring rust come May 20 as we have been in the gym non-stop since my last fight against Mickey Bey. We took a few weeks off to visit Cuba for the first time since my defection. Aside from that I made sure to stay active and I've been training hard to be prepared when my name got called. The 11-month layoff happened for reasons out of my control. My management team has been trying to get the best opponents and unfortunately it took longer than we expected but we are here now and I'm as prepared as I have ever been."

**6) How did your trip back to Cuba come about and what was it like to be back in your home country?**

"It was very emotional and a long eight years since I had been back. I didn't know if I'd be able to go back or not. But I visited the Cuban embassy in Washington D.C. and they told me I'd finally be able to go back to visit my loved ones. It was nothing but nerves until I got over there. It was an emotional time and everyone welcomed me back with open arms in my hometown of Havana. It's something I will never forget, especially for the way I was received."

**7) How do you rate your skills and progression as a fighter considering your last three dominant wins over top quality opposition? Do you feel that you are at the peak of your career?**

"I am definitely at my peak physically, and I'm looking to match that on paper this year. I'm looking forward to getting back in the ring. I don't like to rate myself, I leave that to the people and the media. They've taken notice and that's why I am where I am today, but I am expecting big things to happen this year."

**8) Why did you feel it was time to rise in weight, especially considering the wealth of talent at 135 right now? Who do you consider to be the top 135 fighter now that you are gone?**

"My body was asking for it, 135 was taking too much of a physical toll on me. It may not have been noticeable, but I struggled to make weight during my last fight at 135 and felt I lost some of my power because of the drainage. Since I moved up to 140 I definitely have felt a lot better. It was the right move. Plus, I now have the chance to go after a third world title in a third division, which would be the first time for any boxer from Cuba."

## 9) Why did you make the decision to move from Miami to Las Vegas and how do you think it has benefited you?

"To be honest, there is nothing better for a Cuban than to be living in Miami, because the weather is just right and what we are used to. But at the same time it presents a lot of distractions too. So moving to the boxing hub of the United States is better for me so I don't get wrapped up in anything extra other than boxing. Plus, there are so many sparring partners here and I can go up to Mt. Charleston and get my runs in up there."

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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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