



EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ SECURES IBF BANTAMWEIGHT TITLE WITH UNANIMOUS DECISION OVER MELVIN LOPEZ IN SHOWTIME® MAIN EVENT SATURDAY NIGHT FROM MGM NATIONAL HARBOR IN MARYLAND

Gary Antuanne Russell and Gabriel Maestre Score Victories in Televised Undercard Bouts

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OXON HILL, MD. – August 13, 2023 – Emmanuel Rodriguez became a two-time IBF bantamweight champion Saturday night, securing a unanimous decision over Melvin Lopez in headlining action live on SHOWTIME from The Theater at MGM National Harbor in Maryland in an event presented by Premier Boxing Champions.

Rodriguez (22-2, 13 KOs) sustained swelling over his right eye in the second round of the 12-round battle, and even though the eye ballooned as the fight wore on, he outclassed his opponent to the tune of 120-105 scores in his favor from all three judges.

“This is the result of six months of hard work in Mexico,” said Rodriguez, who is from Puerto Rico. “This wouldn’t have been possible without my entire team. I was able to become a champion once again five years later thanks to them. Let’s go Latin America, let’s go Puerto Rico, and let’s go Mexico!”

“I remained calm despite the headbutt that caused my eye to swell up in the second round. It kept getting more swollen, but my team did an outstanding job keeping it at bay. I never had a problem with my eyesight throughout the fight.”

Rodriguez put an exclamation point on the victory by knocking down Lopez (29-2, 19 KOs) three times in the final round, attacking him with a flurry of punches that put Lopez on the ropes.

“We worked on being powerful and purposeful with our power punches, besides showing off our skills,” Rodriguez said.

“I want Santiago next. He says that he doesn’t think anybody can beat him at 118 pounds, but I’m here to prove him wrong.”

Lopez said he appreciated the opportunity to square off with Rodriguez, and thought he had a chance late in the fight to emerge victorious.

“I thought that Rodriguez was going to run out of gas, because I was hitting him, but the ref was annoying and kept getting in the way saying I was landing low blows,” he said.

“The last round pissed me off. I felt I was solid until then. I was willing to die inside the ring in order to get a win, but I came up short.”

In the co-main event, Capitol Heights, Maryland native Gary Antuanne Russell (17-0, 17 KOs) made quick work of previously undefeated Kent Cruz (16-1-3, 10 KOs), securing his eighth career first-round knockout by sending Cruz to the canvas two minutes and 39 seconds into the super lightweight bout. Russell, a 2016 U.S. Olympian, first knocked down Cruz with a left uppercut to the chin, then ended the fight with a dizzying body blow.

“This is obviously good,” Russell said. “I saw the opening and I took it, and I was trying to remain disciplined defensively at the same time. More than anything, I was trying to make sure I could end it in the first round.

“I wasn’t shooting for the knockout streak, but that’s just what happened during a minute and a half worth of work tonight. If the opportunity is there, why not take it?”

Kicking off the telecast, Gabriel Maestre (6-0-1, 5 KOs) came out blazing and knocked down previously undefeated Capitol Heights, Maryland native Travon Marshall (8-1, 7 KOs) twice en route to securing a second-round TKO. A two-time Olympian, “El Capitan” used a vicious combination to send Marshall through the ropes at the 2:06 mark of the second round in the one-sided welterweight bout.

“I did not expect this knockout,” Maestre said. “I want to thank my team for helping me prepare for this fight. This victory is for Venezuela. We practiced that right hand that hit Travon. I hope that he recovers quickly.

“I was honestly surprised I knocked Marshall out so quickly. He’s a tough, young fighter.

“I saw that Marshall looked a little inhibited and didn’t want to exchange punches with me from the opening bell. Then my right hand ended it.”

Prior to the telecast, the SHOWTIME BOXING COUNTDOWN streamed live on the [SHOWTIME SPORTS YouTube channel](#) and [SHOWTIME Boxing Facebook page](#) and was topped by bantamweight Michael Angeletti (9-0) remaining undefeated with a unanimous decision over Jonathan Lopez (8-1-2), 79-73, 79-73 and 80-72.

The streaming presentation also saw Jose Benavidez, Jr. dominate all five rounds of his scheduled 10-round middleweight bout with Bosnian bruiser Sladan Janjanin (36-16). Benavidez, Jr. (28-2-1, 19 KOs) knocked down his opponent in the first, third and fourth rounds before a series of brutal body blows in the fifth convinced Janjanin’s corner to throw in the towel after the round.

Opening up the live stream, Las Vegas native Damien Vazquez (17-3-1, 10 KOs) stopped Jeronil Borres (12-9-2) of the Philippines with a sixth-round TKO. Vazquez’s sweeping overhand left late in the round resulted in his third knockdown of the period, which prompted referee Sharon Sands to quickly step in and stop the fight.

Veteran sportscaster **Brian Custer** hosted the telecast while versatile combat sports voice **Mauro Ranallo** handled the blow-by-blow action alongside Hall of Fame analyst **Al**

Bernstein and three-division world champion **Abner Mares**. Three Hall of Famers rounded out the telecast team – Emmy®-winning reporter **Jim Gray**, world-renowned ring announcer **Jimmy Lennon, Jr.**, and boxing historian **Steve Farhood**, who served as unofficial scorer. The executive producer was four-time Emmy Award winner **David Dinkins, Jr.** The producer was **Ray Smaltz III** and the director was **Chuck McKean**. Sportscaster **Alejandro Luna** called the action in Spanish on Secondary Audio Programming (SAP) with former world champion and *SHOBOX: The New Generation*® commentator **Raúl “El Diamante” Marquez** serving alongside him as the expert analyst.

Saturday’s SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING telecast will replay on SHOWTIME EXTREME® on Sunday, August 13 at 9 a.m. ET/PT and on Tuesday, August 15 at 10 p.m. ET/PT.

The event was promoted by TGB Promotions.

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CONTACTS: Tim Smith, PBC: (702) 843-3400

Swanson Communications: (202) 783-5500, contact@swansonpr.com

Chris DeBlasio, SHOWTIME: chris.deblasio@showtime.com

Flo Jocou, SHOWTIME: flo.jocou@showtime.com

Kate Howard, SHOWTIME: Kate.Howard@showtime.com

TGB Promotions: (818) 817-8001

Cecelia Lee, MGM National Harbor: clee@mgmnationalharbor.com