



PREMIER BOXING CHAMPIONS ON ESPN MEDIA CONFERENCE CALL TRANSCRIPT WITH KEITH THURMAN & LUIS COLLAZO

Kelly Swanson

Thanks everybody for calling in. We are talking today about the inaugural Premier Boxing Champions on ESPN event. The series is about to start on Saturday July 11 with a fantastic fight and two really great televised fights but today we're talking about the main event which features the welterweight showdown between undefeated knockout artist Keith "One Time" Thurman and former world champion Luis Collazo.

The televised coverage begins on ESPN at 9 pm ET/6 pm PT and that will start with a matchup between undefeated rising star Tony Harrison against Willie Nelson that's going to be a barn burner. Tickets for the live event, which will take place July 11 at the USF Sun Dome in Tampa, Florida are still available. The event is promoted by Warriors Boxing. You can find the tickets through Ticketmaster or visiting the Sun Dome box office.

We're going to get right to the fighters today which is always pleasant for both the fighters and the media. I'm going to first introduce Luis Collazo. His record is 36 and 6 with 19 knockouts. He's from Brooklyn, a former world champ and Luis has definitely faced some of the bigger names in boxing such as Shane Mosley, Ricky Hatton, Victor Ortiz and Andre Berto.

So Luis do you want to just say hello and make an opening statement and then I'll introduce Keith, he can make an opening statement and then we'll turn it over to questions for both guys.

Luis Collazo

Hello everyone. It's great speaking to you guys today. I'm excited for next week. July 11 is going to be a great fight and the boxing fans will be very happy.

K. Swanson

Next I'm going to introduce Keith Thurman "One Time". He's undefeated and it's very exciting for any fighter to be undefeated. He's 25 and 0 with 21 knockouts. He has the pleasure of being able to fight in his hometown of Tampa on July 11. Keith has already appeared on the inaugural Premier Boxing Champion's event when he defeated Robert Guerrero on March 7. So I'm delighted to introduce Keith Thurman and Keith if you want to make an opening comment before we turn it over to the media.

Keith Thurman

Hi everybody how you doing? It's a pleasure to be here. I'm looking forward to July 11 in Tampa Bay, Florida defending my world title in my hometown. Me and my whole team are truly excited. We respect Luis Collazo and we're looking forward to having a great performance and challenge on July 11.

Q

Can you explain to me where you view the prospect of you becoming a significant star in boxing and perhaps some of your reluctance about that?

K. Thurman

Well, at the end of the day I'm just Keith Thurman and I just enjoy being the person that I am. I enjoy some of the spotlight but there are moments where it can be a little overwhelming. I'm looking forward to being champion, it's in my dreams being champion and state champion and being one of the major champions in the sport of the world of boxing. Right now I believe I'm one of the most talked about welterweights currently in the division.

The fans are loving my excitement and they loved the last showdown with Robert Guerrero on the opener for NBC. Now we're opening ESPN and it's another blessing it's a pleasure. I believe AI is recognizing my hard work and dedication to the sport and we're just going to try to keep moving forward man and hopefully just live up to the hype.

Q

Keith what is it that you believe can be overwhelming?

K. Thurman

This camp in general I've had more appearances than I normally make. More interviews and less time to myself, less time to stick to my regimen so I had to make adjustments and I'm just going to have to get used to making these adjustments especially when you're on this stage and you're making these kind of paychecks. I used to think it was all boxing but now I'm understanding the business and that's all that I'm really trying to wrap my mind around.

I'm 26-years-old, a young guy and we're learning constantly in the sport of boxing in the ring and outside of the ring in the sport of boxing. I try to stay level headed I try to stay humble and do the best I can. I'm looking forward to the career that's ahead of me.

Q

What is it about Collazo that you think that could give you a little bit of trouble or make you look really excellent?

K. Thurman

Well he's going to do his best not allow me to look excellent. He's going to do his best to make them upset in my hometown and he has an opportunity to become the world champion. So I'm pretty sure that he can do all that he can do but one thing is, out of all the champions, I still believe that my punching power is still above anybody that he fought so that's going to be something new.

A lot of people, they watch this and they watch that but they don't know how the punches feel and I'm looking forward to a great intense fight.

Q

Can you tell me your opinion about where you think Keith Thurman is compared to all the top guys you've faced?

L. Collazo

I believe Keith Thurman is doing heck of a job. He's undefeated, I don't take anything away from him. In this sport anything can happen. I'm just coming in here prepared for this fight July 11 and you can count on me bringing my best to the ring in July. I'm just ready once that bell rings it just the tapes out the window everything is out the window. Whoever sticks to the game plan the best is who should come out victorious.

Q

Do you have any thoughts Luis about going and fighting Keith in the front of his home crowd?

L. Collazo

Well there are negative and positives. I've been going and taking care of business and you want some excitement so that's my job as a fighter and if that means putting pressure on him I can. But I got to do my job.

Q

Keith, I just want to get your thoughts on the label as a knockout artist and whether or not you think that's something important to you.

K. Thurman

Well, at the end of the day I still hold one of the highest knockout ratios in the welterweight division. At this level, no fighter is coming to get knocked out, they know what they're up against and they know they're up against dangerous fighters. The number one rule in boxing is protect yourself at all times and they're aware of that. They're trying to box hard, they're trying to be crafty and outdo me but you can watch both fights and there was still a knockout in both fights.

The Bundu fight happened in the first round the Guerrero happened in the ninth round. So the punching power is there from the beginning to the end. We want the knockouts, for the fans and for the publicity that lives up to the name "One Time". But at the end of the day we still just want to be a champion and we'll do whatever it takes to stay champion.

Q

Do you worry about this being somewhere near the trap fight, with other potential opportunities that await you down the road?

K. Thurman

No, a lot of people they're just impatient in this spor. They want to talk about a little bit now and they want to talk about more later. It takes time for big fights to brew up and so it happened, you know. (Me and my team) can take one bite at a time. We're looking forward to July 11 we train for July 11. We're not training for anything else and I'm happy to be performing in my hometown defending my title in my hometown and putting on a show on ESPN. It's going to be an exciting event.

Q

Luis do you enjoy the role of underdog and coming on the road against a hometown opponent?

L. Collazo

Absolutely I'm going to go my whole career. There's nothing new. Keith Thurman is the champion so hey if I got to go to his backyard to fight for this world title that's what it is. I'm just blessed to get the opportunity and we want to give the fight fans what they want to insight them and come July 11 on ESPN is going to be a heck of a fight.

Q

How are you handling fighting in your hometown and do you feel like you have to do things to make sure that you're not going to be distracted with things that don't have anything to do with boxing?

K. Thurman

I just kind of let my team handle all of the things on the outside. I just focus on this fight, for the most part there is a little extra comfort level knowing that you're fighting in your own backyard. We've been here many times and we've done this many times, just sticking to the formula and staying true. We don't really change nothing just because it's at home. I got a few more friends on Facebook trying to hit me up about tickets and stuff.

But like I said man I just roll that over to the rest of my team and just stay true to the formula. I'm looking forward to July 11 just like any other fighter.

Q

How hard is it for you to stay patient to take fights like this one to keep building your brand but understanding what's going on?

K. Thurman

See boxing is nothing but politics too. If there weren't any politics it would just be street fighting. So it's an industry, it's a business and it takes time. I've been on the scene for three years now and just earlier this year I got my first fighter in the top ten and to a degree it's a struggle man but it's a grind and I look forward to the grind. I enjoy the grind. My whole life all I wanted to do was be a professional boxer and here we are world champion man.

I'm a young boy who made dreams come true and I'm just trying to fulfill all of my dreams.

Q

Luis what maybe have you learned from all of these kind of underdog roles that are going to help you prepare for Keith Thurman?

L. Collazo

Go out there and be me. I had a great training camp too I've got another week and a half and then I go out there and do what I love to do and do what I do best.

Q

Keith you mentioned earlier in the call that you can find the spotlight overwhelming how do you balance that feeling against your career ambition?

K. Thurman

Well like I said I'm just young and each fight is a new experience. For the past two fights I've gone 12 rounds and prior to that I've never had two fights added together to a 24-round event. I've been on HBO, Showtime, NBC and now ESPN. Each corporation has their own camera crew to have their own little forte on how they like to host the event and it's all those differences. I'm building my name I'm becoming more popular.

They want to see more of me. They want to hear more of me. They want more feedback. You guys are asking these questions and getting feedback. So it's really just a journey. Every fighter bears weight on their shoulders but it's not

weight that we can't handle. If it was weight that we couldn't handle we wouldn't be in the position that we're in. So it's just growing and learning and evolving and understanding this world of boxing.

For the most part it's not too much but I do recognize a shift in what is happening in my career.

Q

Why are you more outspoken about the direction of your career and the selection of fights for you compared to some of the others in your stable?

K. Thurman

I've just been around boxing for a long time. I've been around a lot of old heads in boxing and I've just stayed essential to the sport. I've used my abilities to learn and to evolve to be where I am today. So one thing that I know in life is boxing, so if you want to talk boxing we can talk boxing especially if we're talking about the welterweight division, that's my division and I'm active in my division. Back in the day right before I turned pro I use to never watch professional boxing.

It was like one of the last things I'd ever want to watch on TV. But now that is my career. I'm just more involved and more inclined to it. I have more invested into it. I am investing my life into this sport and so I give it my all, inside the ring outside of the ring and I have a passion for it.

Q

Keith we now see you are kicking in the door in the inaugural broadcast of another PBC installment first against Robert Guerrero and now you have a fight against Luis Collazo. Should we interpret this as the torch is being passed to you since you are the opener for a big broadcast for this production?

K. Thurman

I'm somewhat of a go to guy. I'm reliable you can trust me., I show up I make weight. I stay true to the contract. There hasn't been a lot of controversy with me and my career. Our team is dedicated and I just believe that Al sees that and he's taking advantage of my hunger and just trying to grow me as a fighter. It's a great opportunity and it's a blessing.

Q

Luis how do you tune out your opponent's reputation as you focus and prepare for this bout?

L. Collazo

He got to train for his put his part and I got to put out for my part. It's okay I've been in this situation before so I just got to stay prepared and stay focused and let him do what he has to do.

Q

Keith, do you feel that you have to do more than just win this fight but make a statement in it towards the fans?

K. Thurman

At the end of the day, my job is to win. Everything else is icing on the cake. We want to be great. We want this match to be talked about for months to come later on in the year. We stayed focused to the formulas. It's just another camp for me. It's another fight, it's another opportunity for me to showcase my skills and my talents to the world and I don't believe that I've disappointed anybody yet. July 11 shouldn't be any different.

Q

I also read an article about you recently where you talked about especially when you were younger you were influenced a lot by the martial arts and how your father had wrestled. How has that affected your approach to boxing which really is a martial art but how has it affected you?

K. Thurman

Well all of the martial arts early really built up the passion and it really just lit the fire of wanting to develop some form of a fighting style. At 7-years old I just saw boxing as a form of martial arts and hand-to-hand combat. I didn't see boxing I saw a form of martial arts I did even see a red belt blue belt green belt black belt I didn't see any of that stuff. But I saw an opportunity for a young man to become strong man and here we are 25 and 0 with 21 knockouts.

So I had a great amateur career and boxing has been great to me. I just bought my first house and I got my family a house and it's really it's really a blessing. I'm truly grateful for what the sport has been able to do for me and my family.

Q

Luis you're obviously a veteran fighter you're coming in with a lot more experience than Keith but what do you see your advantages are in this fight where you could get the victory especially in his home territory?

L. Collazo

I just have to stick to my game plan. I'm prepared to go out for this fight and stick to the game plan and do what I do. So then I'm caught up with the hype and I just have fun.

Q

Have you seen any weaknesses in his fights where you could take advantage of?

L. Collazo

Every fight you have to come prepared for and yes you're going to see weaknesses while you're watching the fight with all the fighters but once you get in that ring it's totally different so we just got to stick to the game plan and like that we can get the victory.

K. Swanson

Okay actually that was our last question for you guys. Thanks you so much, that was really great. We got a lot of great comments in the short amount of time, which is what we want to do. So we're going to have closing comments from both fighters and then we will wrap it up.

L. Collazo

Excited for next week. This is about time for the countdown to start in a couple of days but on Saturday night it's a great night of boxing on ESPN and I'm blessed and blessings to all.

K. Thurman

I just want to say thank you for everybody that called in. July 11 is going to be another great fight. We're looking forward to a great performance and looking forward to whatever experience Luis Collazo brings into the ring. It sounds like he's going to be as sharp as he can be. He's going to be looking for the weaknesses that approach him in the fight. So I'm looking forward to it. He has a lot of skills a lot of knowledge and it's going to be a great night of boxing. Thanks to everybody and tune in July 11 for PBC on ESPN.

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