

Boxing News: Aiken and Guerrero Meet the Press

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In anticipation of the IBF featherweight title showdown between the champ Eric Aiken and his challenger Robert Guerrero (Showtime), the two combatants met with the boxing press via telephone conference call on Thursday, August 24, and this is what went down...

Guerrero: I am feeling great. I want to thank everybody. First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for giving me the opportunity. I also want to thank Eric Aiken for giving me the opportunity. I just want to thank everybody.

Begin Press Questions.

Question: Eric, a couple of fights ago, you were just another guy. Then you beat Tim Austin and then got a shot on short notice and won the IBF title. What has that done for your career and confidence?

Aiken: That boosted my confidence level 100 percent, but I cannot take all the credit for it. My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, put everything in perspective for me. And since I've rededicated my life to Him, everything has been working out for me. So I give him all the praise and credit. I just get in there and do what I have to do by fighting, but none of that would have been set up without him. So he gets the glory.

Question: Do you have to pinch yourself so that you can realize that you are a champion now?

Aiken: Absolutely. It has been a long time coming, but sometimes I still just feel like a regular human being, which I am. You know, I am still humble, but I realize that every now and then, I am champion of the world and it is surreal sometimes.

Question: Robert, what do you know about Aiken?

Guerrero: I have seen a lot of stuff. Eric Aiken is a strong fighter. He comes to fight. But, as he said, he has the Lord behind him. When you have the Lord behind you, most of the time you are unstoppable. When you have another guy that is backed by the Lord too, it is just the two of you in there fighting. It is going to be a great fight. I am excited. I cannot wait. I have been working for this since I was nine years old. On Sept. 2, we are going to get it on.

Question: Eric, this is your first defense. Can you talk about that and also about "The Ghost Guerrero." Do you know him? What has your training been like so far?

Aiken: I do not personally know "The Ghost." Like I said before, we have a spiritual bond. We are both born again Christians. I can tell that. I do not really know too much about him. I have seen him fight a few times, and it is going to be a great fight. We are going to put on a show for SHOWTIME and all of our fans – his as well as mine. I am extremely excited about having my

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first defense, especially in a venue like STAPLES and on SHOWTIME. So that excites me. I have just been working hard and I am ready to get it on.

Question: Eric, you are going to be fighting in hostile territory. Do you take that into consideration in your training? Are you mentally prepared for that?

Aiken: I am absolutely mentally prepared for that because I have been the underdog in all of my fights. When I knocked out Tim Austin, I was the underdog. So I like hostile environments in that situation. It makes me strive harder, and work harder, and fight better. So it is not a shock to me. I do not mind.

Question: How good are you against southpaws?

Guerrero: Ask Tim Austin. I knocked him out. Ask Darby Smart. I beat him for the NABA title. I knocked him out. He is left-handed. Ask Agnaldo Nunes. He was left-handed and I knocked him out. So I am pretty good with them.

Question: Do you want to have a prediction for your first defense?

Aiken: I am going to leave that to the fans and the critics.

Question: Robert, what is your prediction?

Guerrero: (in ring announcer's voice) And new IBF Featherweight Champion of the World.

Question: Eric, why do you consider yourself an underdog all the time?

Aiken: Because this is the first time I have had eight to nine weeks to train to get ready for a fight, and my record does not indicate how skilled I am. That is why I am the underdog. Just like I said in the press conference against Valdemir Pereira, I am going to show that records do not mean anything. A lot of their (opponents') W's are against taxicab and bus drivers. So that does not mean anything to me because they are not going to fight me like they fight anybody. They have not been hit as hard as I am going to hit anyone that I fight. I do not mind being the underdog. It makes for better betting odds.

Question: Eric, of your four losses, how many would you say are legitimate losses?

Aiken: One, when I lost against Al Seeger because I did not fight. That is the only regret I have pretty much in my life. I did not fight because I killed myself to make the weight (122 pounds). I cannot fight at 122 anymore. It was a short notice fight as well, and the first punch I threw knocked him down and I just had a mental lapse. I finished the fight on my feet, never was knocked down, never was hurt. I just did not give it my all. I was not mentally there.

Question: Eric, do you feel you fight to the level of your competition?

Aiken: Absolutely. I get up for big fights. (For some fights), I have not trained as hard as I have

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been training right now. For my past victories, I have not trained. When I am fighting guys that were like 5-0 and 8-1, I did not really get up for those fights, which was a mental lapse. I just thought I was going to go in there and knock them out. Unfortunately, for the people to beat me, it is like their championship. So they give it their all, and I did not realize that until it was too late. But all that has changed now. I give training 100 percent.

Question: For both of you – what has your training situation and the people you are working with meant to you?

Aiken: My trainers have been excellent. I have been with Adrian Davis for a couple of years. I also have Jerry Page in my corner as well, an '84 Olympic gold medalist. So they just critique my skills for what I already have and give me other things that they feel I lack. So it has been excellent for me.

Guerrero: I have had John Bray for going on two years now. He is great. Every time I am in camp with him, I am learning more and more. As you guys have seen in the fights, I just keep improving and improving. So John has been awesome and helps me take care of business. He is doing a fantastic job.

Question: Robert, do you feel that maybe this title shot is overdue, or is this now your time?

Guerrero: I have been paying my dues and the title shot is overdue. I have been ready for quite awhile. I am excited that I am getting the shot and I just cannot wait.

Question: “Ghost,” talk about two things. First, the venue, fighting at the Staples Center, and then also what you know about Eric.

Guerrero: STAPLES Center is one of the greatest venues around right now. I am excited I will be fighting there. I have been to a few fights there. The crowd is awesome. I cannot wait. But there is a lot of stuff that caught my eye with Aiken and you guys are going to find out Sept. 2. He is a tough fighter. He comes to fight. He does pop with both hands. Like he just said, he has never trained this hard ever for fights and he gets up for the fight.

Question: Do you feel the same about yourself, as far as getting up for the bigger fights?

Guerrero: Oh yes. When it is time to step up to the plate, I step up to the plate and I get the job done.

Question: Robert, can you talk about the respect that you have for Eric?

Guerrero: I have respect for every fighter -- from the eight year old amateur to the heavyweight champ of the world. What it takes to get in the ring and what you have to do to prepare to get in the ring, I have respect for everybody. I have a lot of respect for Eric. He is a world champ. He has paid his dues and he has fought the fights. On Sept. 2, we are going to do it.

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Question: Eric, do you in any way feel a little bit underestimated going into this one?

Aiken: I do feel underrated. You will see on Sept. 2. But I guess that does not bother me. I know what strengths I have, what weaknesses I have, and what my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, has in store for me. So all that underrating will be out the window come Sept. 2.

Question: Does that motivate you any more?

Aiken: Absolutely.

Question: Robert, regarding the Diaz fight, you lost a controversial decision to him and then in your last fight, you avenged that loss by knockout. What kind of confidence does that bring for you for this fight coming up?

Guerrero: The confidence really never left. I just had a bad night. Diaz is a tough fighter. He comes to fight all the time. You get in with Diaz, he is going to make you look bad or not. If you have a bad night, he is going to beat you. But I proved to everybody around that I did have a bad night. Came and knocked him out in six rounds and he did not get back up.