Interviews with professional pugilists are always fun. Their viewpoints are received, usually, with respect by boxing fans. It is enjoyable to hear what makes them tick, and present it, unfiltered, to TSS readers.

With Andre Ward, finding something to discuss is simple. The guy loves to chat about boxing. Ward is a budding star in the sport, but he also thinks like a fan.

Does he want to be the greatest boxer in the world? Yes. Will he take any shortcuts in his quest for success? No. Does he think he is ready to take on the big names of the division? You bet.

However, Ward is on a hiatus after injuring his knee playing basketball in August. Expect him to be out for at least the rest of the year. But Ward is healing up much faster than expected.

"I spoke with my doctor Warren King and he told me I could get back into training," Ward told TSS. "So I am excited about that. I want everyone to know that my knee is fine and I am ready to get back into the ring very soon."

During his quest to become a top fighter, Ward has watched the sport closely, with the fervor of a hard-core fan. Read on as we debate the hottest topics in boxing. Ward turns the table, and gets the questions rolling.

AW: What do you think about that Pacquiao vs. De la Hoya fight?

RM: Man, I think Pacquiao is going to get him.

AW: What?

RM: Yeah…

AW: Pacquiao is too small.

RM: No, he is too fast.

AW: It all depends on what weight Pacquiao comes in at. He looked good at 135. What is the fight weight, 147?

RM: Yes.

AW: That is twelve pounds, so I do not know. I know Manny walks around at 150 but that is out of shape for him. I don't think that Pacquiao should lift a lot of weights. I think he should come in at about 140. That is where Mayweather went wrong in the De la Hoya fight. He lifted weights to get up to 150 but would have probably had the same pop at '47. I think Pacquiao should come

in around 140 or 141. If he comes in any higher, or tries to make the 147 limit it will be De la Hoya's advantage.

RM: Hey, did you see Pacquiao's first fight against Eric Morales?

AW: Yeah.

RM: If De la Hoya fights smart, he will keep Pacquiao at bay with the jab just like Morales did in that fight. Pacquiao was just coming in with the one-twos and Morales kept popping him with the jab.

AW: Well, that is why Pacquiao is good. He comes in with the jab, jab, jab, and explodes with the straight left. But, Pacquiao has gotten better with his right hook. You know, I just think De la Hoya is too much man for him personally.

RM: But De la Hoya is getting older now man.

AW: Well yeah but, if Oscar lets Pacquiao beat him. I mean, this is not a knock on Pacquiao, but he is a lightweight. And, he just became a lightweight. Pacquiao is a much smaller fighter. This is a good fight for De la Hoya. Business wise, it is great. Legacy wise, being that this is your last fight, supposedly, it is not so good, because if De la Hoya beats him, then people are going to say he beat a smaller man. But if you lose to him, then everyone is going to say you lost to a lightweight.

RM: True.

AW: But it is going to be a huge event, I'll give him (De la Hoya) that.

RM: Oh, of course, that is one of the reasons why they are doing it.

AW: Absolutely, and I don't blame them. I mean, fighters want to be in the Hall of Fame and they want to be remembered, but at the same time, this is a business. The goal is to make all you could make.

RM: You think that is the goal for every fighter, to make all you can make?

AW: Well, it is a goal for me, along the way of trying to win titles and stuff like that. This is a business, man. It is not a game. People lie when they say it is a game. For some fighters, this sport is all they have. Then you hear people say this or that fighter is all about the money. Well, what is he supposed to be about? This is called prize fighting, not pride fighting. We are fighting for a prize. If you take the prize out of it, I do not think that boxing would even be a functioning sport. Honestly, I don't see why people get upset at fighters when they are serious about their money. When you get to a certain prestigious level like Floyd Mayweather, he has been a champion for over a decade and people are getting mad at him for retiring. There is always going to be a young and hungry lion like a Paul Williams lurking somewhere, or a Cotto lurking somewhere. But hey man, I understand what Floyd is thinking. Floyd is not going to fight just to

fight. He has earned the right to pick who or when he wants to fight. And, I am not saying that boxing is all about the money. But fighters get paid and they take care of their family, and pay their bills, so the money is important.

RM: Do you think Floyd is going to come back?

AW: I believe Floyd is going to comeback to fight Margarito. I am not sure but I think he is going to come back. It might be a good idea because Margarito has had some tough, fights lately with Cotto, and even Cintron. And now, that rematch with Cotto is going to be another dogfight for Margarito, I guarantee it. Mayweather is just resting. So, next year might be a good time.

RM: To be honest with you, I do not think Mayweather should comeback.

AW: Why not?

RM: Well, Mayweather has accomplished all that he has wanted to do in boxing. I mean, the guy made $100 million last year. Why make the same mistake of continuing to fight just because everyone wants you to fight? If it is not in you, then it is not in you. I think the biggest mistake Roy Jones made was fighting Antonio Tarver for the second time. Roy initially made the mistake of cutting thirty pounds and taking the first Tarver fight. The fight was great but he should have retired afterwards. If you feel it slipping, let it go. What is the point of moving forward in boxing if you do not have the heart for it?

AW: I know.

RM: There is always someone left to fight. Lennox Lewis is a perfect example. Lewis retired after that Klitschko fight in 2003, but he could have easily made around $50 million or whatever it was, to take the rematch. But, he chose to retire. History does not remember you for the last guy you were supposed to fight. You know what I am saying?

AW: I hope that Floyd stays retired. He has earned it. But I could see him coming back.

RM: Do you think he is one of the best fighters ever?

AW: I think Floyd has to be up there with the top guys. I mean, he fought a young Diego Corrales, Ricky Hatton, De la Hoya, and even beat Genaro Hernandez when he Hernandez was a top dog. I don’t know where, but you have to put him up there with the top guys.

RM: Who is your favorite fighter of all time?

AW: I have to go with Roy. I grew up watching Roy. I was always attracted to the way he handled his business. Roy was his own man. Even at a young age, he did things unorthodox in the ring. And he just took the game to another level. It was excited when Roy fought because you never knew what he was going to do. And he always came out on top. When you are talking about all time great fighters, Roy Jones is there. You know, Roy was something special, man. I don’t know where he lines up with the top guys either. Regardless of what trouble he

has gone through the past few years, when he was at his best, you got to give it to him. Roy Jones was the guy to watch.

RM: I agree.

AW: He was just an exciting guy to watch man.

RM: He was so unique. I always make the argument, twenty or thirty years from now, people are going to be calling Roy Jones Jr. one of the greatest fighters that ever lived. People now kind of dog him. But you'll see.

AW: Well, I agree with you. I think what happened to Roy was more of a physical thing. I don't think it was him slipping up. People have to understand that losing that much weight in a short period of time affects you. You have to remember, he beat John Ruiz when he was a legitimate top ten heavyweight. John Ruiz knocked Holyfield down. He had a portion of the heavyweight championship of the world, and he cracked Roy on the chin a couple of times but Roy came right back. Roy was at the top. Then he made a mistake. I was hearing stories that Mackie (Shilstone) was getting mad. This guy helped Roy put on 25 pounds of muscle over several months and he turned around and lost it in less than five months because Tarver was badgering him. Tarver called him out at the Ruiz post fight press conference. Then Roy said, "I'm gonna get him. I am going to whip him one day." Roy won that first fight. I think he displayed the heart of a champion because he didn't have anything left. He dug down and pulled out the last few rounds on sheer talent alone. I was at that fight. I was a little nervous because I thought they were going to give it to Tarver. Roy won, then the crowd started booing him. And, I think that had something to do with him taking the second fight. Then, it was like a snowball effect after that. But, I don't think he was slipping. I don't think it was matter of him not being able to take a punch. You have to look at what he did. If an overweight guy loses 25 pounds in that short amount of time, it's fine. But when you are dealing with that amount of muscle loss so fast, it messes with the nervous system. That is why he had trouble taking shots. You see, after a few years, Roy is taking shots a lot better now. His body is acclimated to that weight. But, Roy is still the man in my book.

RM: Are you guys' still really good friends?

AW: Yeah, we're still good friends. Honestly, we had the promotional thing going on early in my career. But, he started focusing on his fighting career a lot more. So, it was just time for us to go our separate ways. There are no hard feelings or anything like that. Roy just kind of let go of his portion of the promotional deal. Then Antonio Leonard, who works with my manager James Prince, took the other half and now I am signed with Goossen Tutor.

RM: Ok, I see. What's your favorite fight of all time?

AW: Favorite fight…. Honestly, I have a lot of top fights. I like the young Floyd Mayweather against a young Diego Corrales. That was Floyd's coming out party because they were both young and hungry. I like the Roy Jones/James Toney fight, for the simple fact that Roy had some kind of agreement with Bob Arum to let him out of his contract. And, something happened

(between Bob Arum and Roy Jones) where Roy basically had to win this fight or, he was going to have some problems because he voiced his opinion. So, it was a do or die fight for Roy and he showed up and dominated. Another fight I like is Sugar Ray Leonard/Tommy Hearns, one. That is another occasion where two young guys were going at it and Leonard was down on points but came back to win. There are a lot of fights.

RM: Do you watch a lot of fight tapes?

AW: Not as much as I used to. There was a guy, we called him Poster Boy. He was a collector of fight films and posters. This guy was known for having one of the greatest collections of boxing history of all time. At 38 or 39 years old, he passed away abruptly. And he willed his entire collection to me and my Godfather Virgil. So, we are grateful to receive all of those items. And, regardless of what it's worth, that is classic stuff. I mean, you name it, we got it.

RM: That's awesome.

AW: Yeah, this guy left it to us in his will. So, that is definitely a blessing. I am just honored that he would leave it to us. I have no choice. I am going to be digging through that stuff as soon as I get a chance.

RM: That's cool. Let me know if you need a little help with that. Maybe I could help you out.

AW: (Ward laughs) I was waiting for you to say that. Anytime man, anytime.