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It is the step up bout fans and naysayers have been clamoring for. Andre Ward (18-0, 12 knockouts) has signed on to face Edison Miranda (32-3, 28 knockouts) on May 16th at the Oracle Arena, in Oakland, California.

The always exciting Miranda is a dangerous fighter who possesses ample punching power, but his defense is spotty at times. Ward, the 2004 Olympic gold medalist, promised 2009 would be a groundbreaking year in his career. After easily out pointing a lackluster Henry Buchanan in February, Ward has gotten the challenge he was searching for in Miranda, a throw-it-down type of brawler who looks to inflict punishment at every opportunity.

Miranda went blow for blow with Kelly Pavlik on 5-19-2007 before getting knocked out in the seventh round and he broke Arthur Abraham's jaw in their first bout on 9-23-2006. Three years ago, Miranda was arguably the hottest prospect in the middleweight division. But knockout losses to Pavlik and Arthur Abraham (6-21-2008) respectively have some boxing experts doubting Miranda's whiskers.

Miranda has defeated two no-name opponents since losing that fight to Abraham last year. However, at age 28, Miranda is capable of returning to the top of the boxing heap, starting with a victory over the rising star Andre Ward. Miranda is by far the toughest foe the 25 year-old Ward has faced to this point.

Meanwhile, Ward could not be happier about this development in his career. Ward was excited to tell TSS that his team is set to begin training camp in Las Vegas, Nevada on Friday.

And the Oakland native has dreamed of a homecoming bout against a marquee opponent since turning professional in 2004. Over the past year, Ward has had a difficult time trying to lure a well-known opponent into a scrap. Ward's promoter Goossen Tutor attempted to make fights with Jermain Taylor, Glen Johnson, and Allan Green but none of those combatants accepted terms for one reason or another.

If the chips fall in place, and Ward wins impressively, he will be in line for a big time bout against an elite opponent in early 2010. Miranda might be on the tail end of a once promising career but he comes to fight every time. TSS U, weigh in? Could Miranda resurrect his flailing career? Will Ward exploit that soft chin? Fire away!