

## Win Over Miranda, In Dynamic Fashion, Will Quiet Critics Of Andre Ward

Written by Michael Woods  
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They've chipped away at the man, tried to insert doubt and shame into his head.

Why haven't you done more, gone further, excelled to higher heights?

You won a gold medal at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Andre Ward, you are 25 years old, near the apex of your athletic powers, you campaign in a division that is wide open for the emergence of power player. When are you going to break out, and make the leap from perma-prospect to true contender, and champion?

Patience, the Oakland resident, who owns an 18-0 (12 KOs) record has responded. I am on a path, I trust my footing, my development has been steady, even if you believe it is slower than it should be.

Whaddya want from me, he is tempted to say at times. I fought four times in 2007, three times in 2008 despite blowing out in a pickup hoops game, and I haven't rolled over 18 bums off the street to get where I am now, which is the number two ranked fighter in the WBC and WBO.

The questioning, the doubting, the critiques, they can be quelled completely, or at least greatly diminished, if Ward takes care of business on May 16. The Oaklander will take on wildcard slugger Edison Miranda (32-2, 28 KOs, stopped in two of his losses by Arthur Abraham and Kelly Pavlik), the trash-talking, somewhat iffy chinned Colombian at the Oracle Arena in Oakland.

With a win, delivered in dynamic, entertaining, preferably knockout fashion, Ward will get a crack at Carl Froch, the WBC champion who scored a come-from-behind title defense win against Jermain Taylor last month.

Ward and Miranda talked about the fight on a conference call Wednesday to hype the card, promoted by Dan Goossen.

Miranda was in a subdued mood, for him. Yes, he denied that Ward would represent the best fighter he has faced since he turned pro in 2001. But there were no promises of murder by boxing glove or the like.

"Nah," he said thru interpreter Mariyln Acves, "Ward is not the toughest. Howard Eastman (TKO7 win, March 2006) was."

Asked for a prediction, Miranda said he would kayo Ward, in the tenth round.

Ward said on paper Miranda represents the best foe he has taken on. "I put an emphasis on paper," he said. "I don't know until I'm in the ring."

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He declared himself the underdog, even though Miranda has climbed back from his TKO loss to Arthur Abraham with wins over two journeyman types (Manuel Esparza, Joey Vegas).

Ward touched on some of those critiques by impatient fans and fightwriters. "I've taken a steady climb up," he said. "I don't think I've regressed in my career. We're right where we need to be."

He showed a little trash talking acumen when he said, "You've seen one Edison Miranda fight, you've seen them all. Miranda is a bully, I don't like people who try and bully people."

Fighting in front of friends and family won't prove a distraction, Ward said. "It can be a gift or a curse," said a man who knows of such deals, having been blessed and burdened by the glory and expectations of a gold medal.

This is something of a put up or shut up fight for him, Ward said. "It is about respect, the media, the whole 168 pound division, just in general. A lot of people are caught up in the Miranda hoopla. I'm not buying it, man. But this is the major leagues forward, or major leagues backward. It puts the winner in title contention, it would put me in a mandatory spot.

Both men touched on Jermain Taylor's fadeout against Froch. "You've got to give Froch respect," Ward said. "But I expected a little more from Jermain. I don't understand what's going on with his conditioning."

No, Ward said, he isn't looking past Miranda to Froch. "I've had few to no thoughts about what's next."

"Taylor and Ward fight the same way," Miranda said sneeringly. "They have the same amount of heart, which is not really any heart."

Showtime will televise the card, which I am pretty amped for. I like me a put up or shut up fight, a fight which will go a long way in answering for us Ward's long range promise. Miranda has become a gatekeeper boxer; if Ward is stopped at this entrance, those that've been critiquing his rise will be proven right. Weigh in, TSS faithful...