

Which Andre Dirrell Will We See Against Carl Froch?

Written by Michael Woods

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On many hardcore fight fans' lists, Andre Dirrell is the caboose in the Super Six tournament.

Not enough seasoning, they say. Thin resume, they dismiss. Fast hands, yes, but not quite ready for prime time. Sure, bronze at 2004 Games was a nice bullet point on resume. But '04 grads Amir Khan, Andre Ward, and Yuriorkis Gamboa have all made more noise since Athens, while Dirrell's signature win is against...wait, give us a second, we'll find it...against Anthony Hanshaw.

But dig down a tad deeper, and look harder at Gamboa's record. No stellar types leap out at you in his 15 wins in 15 starts. And truly, is Edison Miranda version 2009, Ward's best "name win," so far out of league from Hanshaw?

One could argue that Dirrell's career hasn't jelled in the eyes of TSS U because his promotional situation hasn't been as deftly handled as Khans', Wards' and Gamboas.' You may recall Dirrell took his time locking down a promoter, and labored in relative obscurity for perhaps longer than he should've/could've. Lord, the kid was wearing trunks with his last named misspelled as "Dirrel" on them, not something that would've gone down had he been attached to a top level advisor. Then again, when given a spot on a big stage, against Curtis Stevens on HBO BAD, Dirrell left watchers unenthused. Harold Lederman was moved to label Dirrell's effort, which featured mucho running and potshotting, "the worst fight I've seen in my life." Three fights later, in May 2008, Nick Charles was 180 degrees the other way: "Dynamic, absolutely dynamic!" the announcer said as a focused, fiery Dirrell, showing above average hand speed and penchant for combos, TKOd Hanshaw in the fifth round.

TSS-EM wonders which Dirrell (18-0, 13 KOs; age 27) will we see in action versus the WBC super middleweight champion Carl Froch (25-0, 20 KOs; age 32), of Nottingham, England, in their Oct. 17 Super Six Showdown. In Nottingham, will Dirrell be the hesitant hitter, the one who gives off a "please don't let me get hit, oh s---, please don't let me get hit" vibe, or will he dial in on Froch, utilizing a hand speed and mobility edge, with the aggressiveness he showed against Hanshaw?

In the opening Super Six Group Stage 1 bout on Oct. 17, undefeated former IBF middleweight champion "King" Arthur Abraham (30-0, 24 KOs), of Germany, will face former undisputed 160-pound titleholder Jermain "Bad Intentions" Taylor (28-3-1, 17 KOs), of Little Rock, Ark., in Berlin, Germany, and Showtime will show it on tape.

TSS looks ahead to October curious whether the sometimes reticent Dirrell might have been put off if he saw Froch's showing against Taylor in April, in which he refused to fold, and stuck around, and waited for Taylor to fade, and dropped an anvil on him in the 12th round.

The lefty out of Michigan maintained on a Wednesday conference call that he has added elements to his training which will make him that much more difficult for Froch. "This is the first

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time (I trained in Big Bear, CA). I trained in Texas for my last fight. Big Bear is a different environment, a higher altitude, so I'm getting the best work possible up here. I'm staying mentally focused and getting myself mentally prepared."

He gave off a super confident aura, an interesting stance considering he hasn't been in as tough as Froch, who holds a win over Jean Pascal as well as Taylor. "I would do anything for the world title, so wherever I have to be, whoever I have to fight, wherever I have to go," Dirrell said. "I'll do anything for the world title because I know I'm ready. He's depending on me being mentally ill-prepared. That won't happen. I'm coming over there in top-notch shape and my mental game is sick right now. I'm just ready to do anything for a world title. If that means I have to go over to Nottingham to pick up a world title, then that's what I have to do. Regardless, I think this is going to be easy as pie."

Froch shot back, "I think hell and back is more like it."

Dirrell didn't back off. "I'll tell you one thing, if I have to go to hell to get the belt, if I have to fight the devil to get it, then I'll be fighting you to get that title. I'm coming over with my 'A' game and I guarantee you that I will keep that crowd quite and he will be at a loss for words by the third or fourth round. Truth be told, he has never, ever faced a guy like Andre Dirrell, and he's going to see that in the fight. Not talking, not hyping myself up, it's the truth. He's never been in there with someone as fast as me, with a guy who can switch up like me. I don't care who he's sparring with out there. He's on the right track, but he's on the wrong train because they're not going to get him ready for Andre Dirrell." Dirrell did concede later that this wouldn't be a rest and recreation junket to England. "If I'm not careful, like I said, Carl Froch is a very powerful puncher," he said. "I take nothing from him. It's going to be a heck of a fight."

And Froch took nothing away from himself on the call. At one point he threw out some hardcore BS, in fact, when he said, "That's why all the boxing press in the world has got me as the favorite" in reference to his one punch power. Kessler has been tabbed as the favorite by a good 85% of pundits, I'd say, for the record.

TSS-EM was slightly taken aback when Dirrell admitted nobody has been tougher for him than Victor Oganov. They met in November 2008, and Dirrell scored a TKO6 win. But Oganov is a severely limited boxer, on the crude side, with not much more going for him than above-average power. "Nobody has ever pressured me as hard as he did," Dirrell said. "I had to prove myself then and I stopped him in six. He's a lot shorter than Carl Froch, but if you pay attention, it's harder to hit shorter guys, on top of the defense that he has, I broke through that."

Can he break through into the upper class of the division against a man who has had to dig deeper as a pro, and succeeded in that regard? Against a man with legitimately heavy hands? TSS-EM leans toward Froch, believing that Dirrell would have to fight 12 rounds of super slick pugilism, virtually mistake free, and thinks that is asking too much in his 19th fight as a pro. Your take, please, TSS U.

SPEEDBAG Dirrell gave a good showing in the candor department. Asked to assess the Abraham-Taylor clash, he said: "Jermain Taylor has to come in shape. Jermain has to come

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ready and he has to come prepared. He can win it if he outboxes him, but if not, Arthur Abraham will make easy work of him.”