TSS recently spoke with Andre Ward's trainer Virgil Hunter to get the final word on why the Andre Dirrell fight did not take place. Hunter gives his thoughts on what really transpired when Dirrell pulled out of the Super Six, the foolishness of boxing, and the possibility of fighting Lucian Bute in the near future.

RM: I know that you were critical of treatment that Andre Dirrell received on the most recent episode of Fight Camp 360. Can you please elaborate on your opinion?
VH: Well you know Andre Dirrell is neurologically hurt. I happened to be at ringside when he was hit with that punch. (Dirrell was hit with an illegal blow to the temple by Arthur Abraham during the 11thround of their bout last March. Abraham was disqualified for the foul.) It was a brutal punch. And he was not ready for the punch. It is obvious that the punch did a lot of damage. So I am not surprised at all to hear that he is having repercussions from the punch. With the tournament being a great concept, with so many great fighters, there have been some setbacks. I just hope that the fighters get the benefit of the doubt. If he is hurt then he is hurt. I think that there should be no question.

RM: How do you think that Dirrell is feeling mentally? He says that he is still having blurred vision. What do you think?
VH: Other than what he says that he has, I can't come up with any other symptoms that accompany his conditions. I am sure that there is more. I think that he stated that he is not sleeping well at night, and his vision is impaired to a point. And he is just not having a general sense of well being. I think if you look at the symptoms of concussions, what Dirrell is describing fits right in with the symptomatic explanation of concussions.

RM: Do you want to touch on the belief that the Ward/Dirrell fight did not take place because of their "great friendship?
VH: Well, all I have to say on it is that they are friends. And by them being friends, people are going to draw their own conclusions. Andre Dirrell has proven that he is a professional. In no way, shape, or form did I believe that he pulled out of that fight because of friendship. I mean, for what reason? His future is not set. People say 'Well, he pulled out of the fight for a bigger money fight down the road.' What guarantee does he have that he will get the big fight? You can't predict where you are going to be down the road in a certain time of your career. Last year, we were projected to finish # 5 or # 6 in the Super Six Tournament. This year we are projected to be #1. It would be foolish in this game to attempt to predict the future. To say that he is saving himself to fight Andre Ward for more money in the future is foolish. There is no way to predict where his career is going to be. And there is no way to know where Andre Ward's career is going to be. To say that Dirrell is saving himself to fight Andre in two years time is ridiculous. There could be two fighters at the top that we don't even know right now. This is boxing, anything can happen.

RM: So it is foolish to plan?
VH: It is foolish to plan in boxing because you never know what could happen. When the

tournament started Dirrell planned to win. But he did not plan to get hit with a foul, and be neurologically put out of the tournament. I am sure Kessler was favored to win the tournament. But he did not plan to pull out because of cuts and double vision. You can't say that someone is planning or plotting, sitting on the shelf just for the big fight down the road. You can't say that.

RM: So what is the benefit of planning in boxing?
VH: There is no benefit. In this business, people are going to like you, and people are going to dislike you. The people that dislike you are going to fathom anything that they can to try to prove a point. The people that like you are going to be concerned about your health and well being. That is the way it is in life. I saw the same thing with Tom Brady when he had his knee injury. I saw the same thing with other athletes in other sports. It is a part of the territory with being a professional athlete. When fans get involved; those that hate you are attack you. And those that love you are going to be concerned about your well being.

RM: So are you concerned about Andre Dirrell's well being?
VH: Of course I am concerned about his well being. You have to understand that I know him since he was ten years old. He has a family. He just got married. He has two children. Boxing is what he does for a living. He is in the most dangerous sport in the world. And to be right at the cusp of infiltrating the pound for pound lists of boxing, and being considered one of the best fighters in the world today, I don't think that he would give that up. You have to remember that there was only a short period of time for him between fights, which took place in March. And for him to get ready for another fight, with the rigors of camp, and things like that, he could have been risking being permanently impaired. We have seen so many examples of fighters that fought when they should not have been fighting. One of the cases that come to my mind is Benny "The Kid Paret. After fighting Gene Fullmer and taking some horrific shots, Paret went right back into the ring with Emile Griffith three months later, and he died as a result. These are the things in this sport that you want to make sure that you are 100% right about.

RM: One guy we have not even talked about is your upcoming opponent on Saturday night, Sakio Bika.
VH: I happened to think that this is a very dangerous fight. We are not cutting any corners in preparation. He is respected. And we hope to stop him from doing what he wants to do.

RM: Before the Allan Green fight, there was a lot of animosity and tension between your respective camps. I don't sense that with Bika. It seems like you guys are just doing work, business like.
VH: Well boxing has a place for those that talk and predict. You have one career, and you should do it your way. You could lose a fight, and if it is in your personality to come back and talk after you lose, then by all means do it.

RM: So Bika is not really talking is he?
VH: No, I don't recall him having a history of talking trash. But I think further down the road, with certain opponents, it will come. Again, it is just boxing.

RM: What are your thoughts on Lucian Bute signing a three fight deal with Showtime?
VH: I think that it is a great thing. I think that Showtime has made a commitment into their vision

of things. They have a great golden card with the Super Six regardless of how many champions have had to back out, the fighters are still well known. Now with the addition of Bute waiting in the wings to fight the winner, or some of the participants in the tournament, I think it will keep the Super Middleweight division very exciting over the next few years to come. All of the fighters are relatively young. And I can't think of anyone in this crew that does not have at least three or four years of good fighting left in him. Even if you have a Bute/Abraham, Ward/Froch, or Johnson/Kessler, all of those are good fights. I can't think of one fight in that group that Showtime would not be interested in. These are good quality fights.

RM: There are some that believe that Bute is already lined up to fight the winner of the Super Six.
VH: Well, you have to remember that they already promised Kessler that. So, I don't know what is going on. Kessler was promised the winner of the Super Six. So we don't know how that is going to unfold. But with having Bute there it creates a lot of stimulating possibilities for the fighters and fans. The talent is really close between the top eight fighters in this division. It is a well balanced division. Bringing Bute in brings anticipation. It brings excitement. And we are looking forward to fighting him one day.

RM: Do you think that it is going to happen next year?
VH: It is hard to say. I think that the guy that wins the Super Six is in a good position on how he wants to go about doing things.