

Andre Ward Fears Not Sakio Bika

Written by David A. Avila

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Like some kind of ninja Andre Ward has crept into the American consciousness.

Mikkel Kessler and Allan Green were supposed to derail Ward but it was he who slipped past them smoothly like a puff of smoke.

That's Oakland smoke.

WBA super middleweight titleholder Ward (22-0, 13 KOs) now faces the always dangerous Sakio Bika (28-4-2, 19 KOs) on Saturday Nov. 27, at the Oracle Arena in Oakland. Showtime will televise the event along with Carl Froch's battle with Arthur Abraham.

When Ward first arrived on the professional scene with Olympic gold medal in hand he was seen as somewhat of a disappointment. Few liked his run and slap style and despite incredible athleticism, the future looked bleak.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the boxer known as "Soldier of God" began to accumulate subtle boxing skills here and there. Scootering around the ring during a fight became more and more rare as he began to acquire inside fighting skills that allowed him to stay in the pocket and dish out frightening counters.

It was never more evident than in his Cayman Island fight against Jerson Ravelo, a strong and fast boxer with good pedigree. That humid night Ward showed the islanders that he wasn't running from anyone any more as he stood two feet in front of Ravelo and exchanged wicked bombs with the Dominican. The fight was over in eight rounds as Ward grabbed the NABO title that night.

Wins over Henry Buchanan and Edison Miranda followed. The speedy hands, reflexes and foot speed were adjusted for the pro game and now Ward sits among the very best boxers in the world pound for pound.

"I'm excited about this fight, said Ward knowing that it will not count toward the Super Six Super Middleweight Classic tournament. "It's a world title defense.

Nobody makes excuses for Ward. He doesn't need them. Quietly he's become one of the most gifted prizefighters on the planet.

Still, Bika has a way of upsetting good fighters.

Last July in Las Vegas an undefeated Jean Paul Mendy was getting obliterated by Bika. A slow moving referee Joe Cortez allowed Bika to land one more blow as Mendy's knee was on the ground and the boxer was disqualified. If only the referee had been in better position than Bika would have ended up with a sure win instead of the DQ loss.

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It was very unfortunate but that's boxing. It was really nobody's fault.

"Everyone who saw the fight knows it was supposed to be stopped in the first round. I didn't see the referee. When I was disqualified it was a big mistake, Bika said.

Dirrell

Ward was scheduled to meet long-time friend Andre Dirrell who has defeated Arthur Abraham and who was hit while down just like Mendy. In Dirrell's case he has not recovered from that blow many months ago.

Ironically Bika is stepping in for Dirrell.

"I'm very happy to be a part of this, said Bika who won the Contender reality television tournament back in 2007 in one of the most memorable fights that year. He and Jason Codrington exchanged hellacious blows. "I have a chance to fight number one.

Yes, Ward is number one.

The humble Oakland prizefighter may not boast but confidence seeps out of every single word.

"At the end of the day my championship title is on the line, said Ward about the importance of fighting Bika. "He's in there trying to hurt me. This is big as it gets.

Despite incredible ring skills the Oakland boxer knows that he may be facing someone even more dangerous than Dirrell, Green or Kessler.

"The media appointed him (Bika) the most feared man in the division. I'm not buying that, says Ward. "I'm just as hungry as any opponent that I'm fighting. I'm just as desperate as any opponent I'm fighting.

Ward always has something up his sleeve.