

Was Ward Looking For A Way Out From Green Fight? Team Ward Responds

Written by Raymond Markarian
Wednesday, 17 March 2010 17:00

On Monday, Andre Ward's camp announced the postponement of his fight with Allan Green because of a knee injury. The fight was supposed to take place on April 24th, in Oakland, Ca.

Ward re-aggravated his right knee on which he had ACL surgery on in August of 2008. Internet rumors began to swirl about the cause of the delay and the timing of the announcement.

I spoke with Ward and his trainer Virgil Hunter about the matter. They say that there are no smokescreens surrounding what happens to be a freak occurrence.

"It was a minor set back," said Ward via text message when I asked him about the injury a few days ago. "I am doing good. I'll get back in there soon."

After every fight, Ward typically takes two weeks off before returning to the gym. However after the bout with Kessler, Hunter and Ward decided to take six weeks off instead. Hunter felt that Ward needed the extra rest.

"I thought it would be best for him to take six weeks off this time. I told him 'Hey, your body needs it. You need a complete rest.' So he took it off but when he came back, he was so excited, that he pushed it too hard," said Hunter.

"You see Andre has been in shape for so long that he could have been off for six months and ran ten miles and still not get tired. You could do that but when your body says yes and your ligaments say no, there could be a problem."

Ward's knee began to swell up. Hunter said that they thought the swelling was a minor reoccurrence from the ACL injury Ward obtained during a pick up basketball game in the summer of 2008. However the swelling did not go away. The inflammation arose to the point where Ward had trouble running.

"It just kept getting worse and worse. We found ourselves trying to work around it. Last week it was so bad, he couldn't run at all," Hunter said.

Ward then met with Dr. Warren King in Oakland, Ca, the man who performed his ACL surgery in 2008. Dr. King said that the structure of his knee was sound and strong but the ligaments surrounding the knee were strained from being over-used. Therefore the Doctor advised Ward to lay off running for the next four to six weeks. That was the cause of the holdup as far as the Ward camp was concerned.

Meanwhile a story broke out on ESPN.com regarding the validity of the delay. According to ESPN, Lou DiBella, Allan Green's promoter, was not pleased with the postponement, blaming Dan Goossen, Andre Ward's promoter, for shady action. DiBella did not question the truthfulness of Ward but he thinks Goossen wanted to pull out of the fight regardless.

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DiBella told ESPN, "I had more than one person say that if the fight happens at all, it is not happening April 24 and that Goossen doesn't really want Ward in the tournament any longer and that I should do myself a favor don't make plans for April 24. Don't book hotels, don't book flights."

Virgil Hunter had his own take on the matter. He says the squabble between Goossen and DiBella is merely promoters being promoters.

"They are going to say what they are going to say, that is promoter stuff," said Hunter. You just can't get caught up in it. We don't operate like that. My concern goes out to Allan Green and his camp. Coming from a trainer and fighter's perspective we know Green is training hard. And we really hate that he (Ward) got hurt because we had to postpone the fight."

While he was in Dallas for the Pacquiao/Clottey fight, DiBella also said that he heard many people tell him that Goossen was pulling Andre Ward out of the fight regardless of the injury. But Hunter says that Goossen had no clue about the setback until the following Monday.

"Goossen couldn't have known over the weekend, because we just told him today," said Hunter when we spoke on Monday. "Andre did not even see the surgeon until Friday. So he could not have known what was going on. I think they are wrong there."

Hunter went on show his respect to Allan Green. For Hunter, the boxing credo means much more than a minor injury or two promoters throwing jabs at each other.

"You have to respect the fact that Allan Green is down there in Florida, away from home. He is training and it is not free. More than anything we are professionals. We have opponents or adversaries, but at the same time we respect other fighters and trainers because in this sport, you don't get paid for lost time. More than anything we apologize for the setback to John David Jackson, Allan Green and his camp."

"We have it hard enough as fighters. And if an injury occurs or if somebody pulls out of a fight, we don't get compensated for that. Allan Green deserves a 100% Andre Ward. So if he wins there are not going to be any excuses. And we deserve a 100% percent Allan Green so if we win there won't be any excuses either," Hunter said. "As far as DiBella is concerned, I apologize to him too. What else can I say?"

To clarify his stance, Hunter reminded us to that Andre Ward is not to blame for this injury. He also wanted to point out that this injury is not an excuse to get out of the fight.

"Andre was back fighting in a ring five months after ACL surgery. The original diagnosis was for him to be out for eight months to a year. So he has proven his dedication. I mean, the guy has shown that he has work ethic.

"Who has done that in any sport? Who has come off of an ACL injury in five months? And we are not talking about a team sport; I am talking about a boxing ring. It took Tom Brady almost two years to come back from an ACL. Daunte Culpepper hasn't even come back from one yet.

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To come back to a high level like that is a tremendous feat. So to say Andre is using it as an excuse to push the fight back is ridiculous.”

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