

## Bantams To Battle On Showtime: Who Do Ya Like?

Written by TSS Press

Thursday, 02 December 2010 19:00

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Four of the world's most talented bantamweights participated in a national media conference call to discuss **The Bantamweight Tournament: Winner Takes All** – a two-stage, single-elimination tournament of 118-pounders – which begins with two Semifinal bouts on **Saturday, Dec. 11, LIVE**

on

### **SHOWTIME**

Ⓜ at 9 p.m. ET/PT (delayed on the West Coast) from

**Emerald Queen Casino**

in

**Tacoma, Wash**

.

In the opening bout, undefeated, world-ranked rising star **Abner Mares** (20-0-1, 13 KOs), of Guadalajara Jalisco, Mexico, will face two-division world champion

**Vic “Raging Bull Darchinyan**

(35-2-1, 27 KOs), of Sydney, Australia, by way of Armenia.

Then, former IBF 118-pound champ **Joseph King Kong Agbeko** (27-2, 22 KOs), of Bronx, N.Y., by way of Ghana, Africa, will try to earn back the title from the man that won it from him, current IBF champ **Yonhhy**

**“El Colombiano Perez**

(20-0-1, 14 KOs), of Santa Fe Springs, Calif., by way of Colombia.

With a win over Darchinyan, Mares could earn a rematch against Perez, who he fought to a disputed majority draw last May 22, or face the hard-hitting Agbeko. If Darchinyan wins his semifinal bout, he could face the last man to beat him, Agbeko, who won a close, unanimous decision in July 2009.

Regardless of the scenarios, storylines and matchups, each boxer starts the tournament on Dec. 11 with the same chance to make, and win, the Final – and ultimately earn bragging rights as the best Bantamweight in the world.

All fighters in The Bantamweight Tournament are guaranteed two fights within the tournament structure - Semifinals and Finals. The winners of each Semifinal will fight for the Bantamweight Tournament Championship with the losers fighting in the consolation fight on the same night. In the event of a draw in the Semifinals, SHOWTIME will determine the Championship opponent based on tournament performance.

Highlights of what the fighters had to say on Thursday:

**(Note, Mares and Darchinyan participated in the first half of the call, followed by Perez and Agbeko.**

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### **PEREZ-AGBEKO OPENING COMMENTS:**

**PEREZ:** "I want to thank all the media and SHOWTIME for making this possible. I can't wait for December 11th, I can't wait for this fight. This is the best thing that SHOWTIME could have done. I can't wait for the bell to ring on December 11th.

**AGBEKO:** "I am really excited for this fight and I am so happy to come back and fight. I was a champion for some time and now I am going into the ring not as the champion and I think it is less pressure for me.

### **Discuss the experience of fighting someone as hard hitting as Darchinyan.**

**AGBEKO:** "I respect Vic a lot and I am confident in my boxing. I am looking forward to this upcoming fight.

### **Do you have an advantage coming into this tournament since you have already fought two of the other participants?**

**AGBEKO:** "I really respect all the fighters, we are all great fighters in tournament. I feel that this is a tournament where I can prove that I am the best. I believe I will come out of this tournament the winner.

### **Joseph, why do you expect to win this fight? What happened in the first fight with Yonhny? What has been happening in the last year since that fight?**

**AGBEKO:** "I am in a competition with myself, I was the champion and I lost it to Yonhny Perez and I have really been working hard for this fight. It is the fight of my life, the fight of my career. I have to win this fight to become a champion again. I believe I am going to win this fight. Everything was going well in the last fight, but because of the head butt I lost. I wasn't embarrassed. In the last year, I was supposed to fight a guy but the fight the fight didn't happen.

### **How will this fight be different than the first fight with Joseph?**

**PEREZ:** "I know this is going to be a great war just like the first one was. I know how good of a fighter Agbeko is, I saw and felt him in the ring. I know he is prepared technically and he will try to take the belt, but I have prepared myself to keep the belt - no one will take it away from me. My preparation is a key for this fight. It is going to be a terrific event and a very good fight.

### **You were a bit disappointed with the first bout and scorecards. When you watched the fight on tape did you see anything you could do differently in this fight to get a better edge?**

**AGBEKO:** "Looking at the old fight, which I watched a couple of times, the only thing I shouldn't have done when it happened is me stopping, I should have continued after the head butt.

### **How is your gameplan different?**

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**AGBEKO:** “Yonhny is a good fighter, very tough and good conditioning. This time it is going to be a different fight all together. He throws a lot of punches, he is a very good fighter and this time it is going to be a different fight all together. Physically, I am very prepared for this fight. Yonhny is a very busy fighter, and this is going to be a war, because I am coming ready for war. I know he is tough and can punch and that is what I am coming with as well.

### **Perez, do you see yourself as the favorite in the tournament?**

**PEREZ:** “It’s really something that is not important to me, what people say and think of me. The only person that I have to show and demonstrate to is myself. If people have forgotten about Yonhny Perez, they have forgotten the champion of this tournament, but that doesn’t make a difference to me. All I have to prove is that I can be the best in my division and they will realize who I am.

### **Can you talk about what Agbeko said about the last fight?**

**PEREZ:** “I know very well who was doing the head butting the night of October the 31 (2009). I know Agbeko was a great fighter, but I want him to stop complaining about the head butting. The one who had the eyebrows that needed to be stitched was Yonhny Perez. Ask Vic as well, he (Agbeko) didn’t bust his face because of his punches, he busted his face because of his head. I wish that he stops complaining about the head butting that night. I only ask that he gets prepared because we gave the fans a great fight. I am ready he is ready, and lets do it again.

**AGBEKO:** “I don’t agree with that, but this fight is going to be a different fight. When we get into the ring, we are going to know who the best fighter is. He has had my belt for a year and I am going to get my belt back.

### **What are your thoughts about the other fight on this telecast?**

**PEREZ:** “I really haven’t put too much though into it. I am really just focused on my fight about Agbeko. My main concern is the guy who is going to be in front of me, Agbeko. I respect all the fighters and I am willing to fight anyone because after I beat Agbeko it will be a war with anyone else.

**AGBEKO:** “I think it (Darchinyan-Mares) is going to be a very strong and beautiful fight. I have a fight in front of me on the same night, may the best fighter win and face me in the finals.

### **DARCHINYAN-MARES OPENING COMMENTS:**

**DARCHINYAN:** “I am training well, I am in LA now, been here for the last 20 days. I am very focused on the fight. This is the first time I have been training for this long. He will fight me and I will be very good, fast and strong. He is going to remember me.

**MARES:** “Thank you everybody for being on this call. I am really grateful for SHOWTIME and Golden Boy. I have been training hard because I know Vic is a tough, strong fighter and he is a champion. You have to train really hard and win and look good winning against the champion.

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### **Vic, you have gone between bantam and super flyweight, how comfortable are you at fighting at bantamweight?**

**DARCHINYAN:** "I was looking for a match at super flyweight. When I fought I was impatient before, I just wanted to knock him out, but I am comfortable at any weight. I can lose as much weight as I want or I can put on as much as I want. It is going to be my show, my tournament. I am going to prove to everyone that I am very skillful and a good puncher. I am very prepared and confident.

### **Abner, how do you plan to approach Vic?**

**MARES:** "Vic has proven that he is a power puncher and strong fighter. I think speed is my advantage. I am ready for a slugfest or boxing match. I have trained really hard and this is going to be a great fight.

### **Since Agbeko beat Darchinyan and Yonhny beat Agbeko, does that make you the less experienced fighter?**

**MARES:** "Styles make fights, those styles were perfect for those fights. I am a boxer and I can do both, but the other fighters only have one dimensional fighting styles.

How do you plan on overcoming Vic's experience?

**MARES:** "Vic is a great champion with great experience, but fighting fighters with great experience just makes me strong and a good fighter.

### **Richard, talk about how big a young fighter like Abner could be in Mexico and worldwide:**

**RICHARD SCHAEFER (Golden Boy Promotions):** "He has 13 KO's and you put all of that together and you look at the history of the bantamweight division in Mexico, you can see that they have been looking for the next big star. If he wins the tournament, he could be that next young star. So all of Mexico is going to be looking very closely at this tournament and I am sure the rest of the world will as well.

### **Vic, how much of a relief is it to be in this tournament?**

**DARCHINYAN:** "I am very excited about this tournament. I am prepared and all the guys are good. I have fought great champions and great guys, this is a great division. I am proving that I have come back better. I am going to show everyone that I am much stronger. I am going to be faster and stronger and I am going to out-school Abner. I am going to be much stronger and win this tournament easily.

### **Abner, talk about what it meant to get invited to this tournament.**

**MARES:** "I am really honored and excited. When the decision (against Perez) was done and they said that there was a draw, I thought it was bad. But now you see it was good. I showed a

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lot of heart against the champion and I think that is what got me in this tournament. I am grateful for those who put me in this tournament. I belong at this level, I am excited and this is what I do.

### **Vic, are you rooting for Agbeko to revenge your loss?**

**DARCHINYAN:** “Yes I would love to have a rematch with him because there is unfinished business. But it doesn’t matter if he wins or losses I just want to be in the finals. I would love to meet him. I think Agbeko does

a lot of work with his head and I will be careful next time and not let him get too close to me. It is a very complicated fight between Perez and Agbeko and I think it is a very good fight.

**MARES:** “There is no easy fight, they are both good fighters. I drew against Yonhhy so I would love to fight him. But if Agbeko beats Yonhhy then he is the better fighter and I will fight him. I think the one who stops throwing first will lose. I think it will be a great fight. I think the one who gets tired faster will lose.