“Our No. 1 Thing Is To Try To Wear Down Our Opponents –YONNHY PEREZ

“I’m Sure This Time He’ll Take Care Of His Head – JOSEPH AGBEKO

“This Fight Is A Mismatch. I Am Just Too Good For Him – VIC DARCHINYAN

“Speed Beats Power. We’ll Prove That On Dec. 11 – ABNER MARES

NEW YORK (Dec. 8, 2010) -- Four of the world’s most talented bantamweights take center stage this Saturday, Dec. 11, LIVE on SHOWTIME® at 9 p.m. ET/PT (delayed on the West Coast) in the highly anticipated The Bantamweight Tournament: Winner Takes All . The two-stage, single-elimination tournament of world-class 118-pounders begins with two Semifinal bouts at the 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 Yonnhy “El Colombiano Perez (20-0-1, 14 KOs), of Santa Fe Springs, Calif., by way of Colombia.

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

Here are some thoughts gathered during each fighter’s camps and what they think about their opponents just days away from the tournament:

YONNHY PEREZ:

The 31-yeard-old Perez trained at the Santa Fe Springs Activity Center in Santa Fe Springs, Calif., sparring more than 100 rounds with 118 to 122 pounders during an eight-week camp.

Perez was successful when he challenged Agbeko for the IBF title in October 2009 on SHOWTIME, so the unbeaten, versatile boxer doesn’t feel the need to switch up his game plan.

“My style really doesn’t change, Perez said. “What my corner tells me to focus on is my output of punches. Our No. 1 thing is to try to wear down our opponents.

“And we’ve seen some other things against Agbeko that I think we can take advantage of.

Though he is confident he will successfully retain his title, Perez isn’t looking ahead to a possible rematch with Mares or a showdown with Darchinyan.

“It doesn’t matter to me who I fight, Perez said. “I’m just concentrating on this fight. I have to win that before I think about the next one. Whoever it is, we’ll be prepared. My main goal is to come out of the tournament the same way I entered it -- as a world champ.

JOSEPH AGBEKO:

Agbeko recently wrapped up a 10-week training camp at John’s Gym in the Bronx. The hard-hitting African sparred an average of 14 rounds a day, three or four times a week, mostly facing younger and aggressive super bantamweights and featherweights.

Agbeko, who wants to win back his title for his native Ghana, knows he needed to make some changes to his approach after losing the crown to Perez.

“There will be a lot of differences, Agbeko said. “I’m going to be ready for him. I lost the last one so I can’t go in with the same game plan. I needed to make some changes and you’ll see them in the ring.

While standing one-and-a-half inches shorter and spotting the defending belt-holder two-and-a-half inches in reach, the 30-year-old contends that Perez’s size wasn’t a difference maker in their first fight.

“It wasn’t a problem at all, Agbeko said. “When he fights, he brings his head in -- that was the problem for me. I’m sure this time he’ll take care of his head and won’t bring it in.

One thing Agbeko isn’t doing is looking forward to the tournament finals.

“Right now, the main issue for me is Yonnhy Perez, he said. “I’m concentrating on Yonnhy. So after the fight, when I got my belt back, I’ll think about the next opponent. But right now all my concentration is on Yonnhy Perez and winning my belt.

VIC DARCHINYAN:

The 34-year-old Darchinyan just wrapped up a three-week camp at Main Event Sports Club in Glendale, Calif., in his quest to win back a world title and the bantamweight tournament.

“I did all my sparring in Australia, but when I came here I just worked on my legs, my movement and my speed, Darchinyan said. “All my hard sparring was in Australia, but I worked on my speed in Los Angeles.

Darchinyan insists that although he lost to Agbeko in his first fight at 118 pounds that he’s not uncomfortable in his new division.

“I feel comfortable at 118 pounds, absolutely, Darchinyan said. “When I fought him he didn’t overpower me -- he just moved too much and head-butted me too much. There was really only a one-point difference in the scorecard.

“It was not because of weight. I fought too much and went for the knockout and didn’t control myself. I’m more controlled now and ready for Mares.

Darchinyan would love a rematch against Agbeko but claims he’d also love the chance to knock out Perez to earn back his world title.

“I’d love to face Agbeko in the finals, but if he loses we’ll knock out Perez, Darchinyan said. “We’ll take anyone in this tournament.

Regardless of who he’d like to face in the finals, Darchinyan claims to have a solid plan of attack for Mares.

“My game plan is to be fast and powerful, Darchinyan said. “I’ve fought in 14 world title fights, he’s fought in one. I’m going to out-school him badly and prove to the whole world that I’m too good for him and anyone in this division.

“This fight is a mismatch. I am just too good for him.

ABNER MARES:

The 25-year-old Mares trained at home for the first time at the Maywood Boxing Gym in Maywood, Calif. The rising star is reunited with former trainer Clemente Medina, who was his trainer when he made his pro debut and for his first six professional fights.

Mares focused on sparring with larger opponents – mostly 126 pounds and up – to prepare for the heavy-hitting Darchinyan. Most notably, he sparred with former super bantamweight world champion and current featherweight contender Daniel Ponce de Leon.

“We sparred with guys that have a similar style to Vic, Mares said. “Vic gets reckless and throws such wild punches that you don’t know where they are coming from. The guys I worked with are heavy punchers so it’s to our advantage. Looking for southpaw sparring is always difficult, but I think training with heavier guys will make me not feel the heavy hits of a smaller guy like Vic when I get in the ring.’’

Mares, who said he has had issues making weight in the past, trained twice a day -- in the afternoons and evenings – for the first time in his career.

“I think that’s what has made the difference for me, Mares said. “We won’t have trouble making weight and we’re eating a lot better. I weighed in at 121 on Dec. 1, so 118 pounds won’t be an

issue for us this time.

The youngest fighter in the tournament, Mares says a win over a two-division world champ like Darchinyan would be a career-defining victory.

“Being in a ring against a big fighter like Vic Darchinyan and beating him will definitely make a statement, Mares said. “If I beat him I’ll be making a statement that I’m a legitimate champion, a strong fighter and a guy with a big name. It’d be even better if I knocked him out.

For the Mexican-born Mares, there’s an added incentive and motivation to defeat Darchinyan, who owns victories over Mexican warriors Cristian Mijares and Jorge Arce.

“For me, it makes it much more important and exciting for me to beat a guy like Darchinyan who has beaten all the Mexican fighters, Mares said. “I definitely want to be the Mexican that beats him. I just want to get in there with him.

But the fact that he’s defeated a few of Mares’ idols doesn’t mean he’s intimidated by Darchinyan’s unorthodox and unpredictable style.

“Speed beats power, Mares said. “And come Dec. 11, we plan on proving that.

Mares would also clearly love to avenge his draw against Perez in the Finals of the tournament, but he insists that there is no easy fight for the four 118-pounders.

“I definitely have some unfinished business with Yonnhy, so if it were my choice I would choose Yonnhy because of the draw I have against him, Mares said. “But there’s no easy fight. The winner of those two will definitely be a hard fight for whoever wins our fight. There’s no easy way to win this tournament.