

Written by The Sweet Science
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LOS ANGELES (April 21, 2011)—An untimely back injury sustained by IBF Bantamweight World Champion Joseph Agbeko earlier this week has forced him out of Saturday's scheduled title defense—and the SHOWTIME Bantamweight Tournament Final—against Abner Mares. The co-main event bout featuring former world champions Vic Darchinyan vs. Yonhhy Perez will go on as planned for the vacant IBO Bantamweight Championship this Saturday, April 23, at Nokia Theatre televised live on SHOWTIME at 10:30 p.m. ET/PT (delayed on the West Coast).

Agbeko and Mares plan to attend Thursday's Bantamweight Tournament Final press conference to address members of the media—at ESPNZone L.A. LIVE at Noon local time.

The Bantamweight Tournament Final: Winner Takes All is promoted by Don King Productions, Gary Shaw Production, Golden Boy Promotions and Thompson Boxing Promotions and is sponsored by Corona and DeWalt Tools.

This release was released by DKP Thursday early afternoon:

IBF Bantamweight Champion Joseph Agbeko Forced to Postpone Saturday's Bantamweight Tournament Final

Doctors Blame Sudden Onset of Sciatica as Likely Cause of Injury

LOS ANGELES—International Boxing Federation bantamweight champion Joseph Agbeko arrived in Los Angeles on Monday in preparation to defend his title on Saturday but has been forced to withdraw after suffering what doctors have diagnosed as likely the sudden onset of sciatica.

Agbeko had advanced to the final of the SHOWTIME-televised "Bantamweight Tournament: Winner Takes All" and was to have appeared in what would have been the biggest fight of his career, the main event on Saturday at Nokia Theatre against undefeated Abner Mares of Los Angeles, which has now been postponed.

Agbeko, from Accra, Ghana, who trains in New York, arrived at Los Angeles International Airport on Monday at 11:30 p.m. after multiple delays at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport and six hours in flight.

Before entering a car that was at the airport to pick up him and his team, Agbeko suddenly collapsed in the roadway outside of the baggage claim area. Barely able to move, he remained face down on the pavement until police and an ambulance arrived to transport him to nearby

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Marina del Rey Hospital.

Agbeko stayed in the hospital emergency room until 5 a.m. on Tuesday. Dr. Susan Salazar treated him and made a diagnosis of sciatica.

Sciatica is described in medical literature as the inflammation of the sciatic nerve, which runs from the lower part of the spinal cord down through the back of the thigh. Agbeko complained of pain in his lower back radiating down through the back of his right thigh.

Agbeko was evaluated again on Wednesday by another Los Angeles physician, Dr. Richard S. Gluckman, who concurred with the initial diagnosis of sciatica. He also issued a letter that stated, in part, that Agbeko “is not fit nor cleared to compete in a combative sport at this time.”

The doctor also ordered an MRI examination for Agbeko. He will report his findings after he has had an opportunity to review the test results.

“It is hard for me to explain the deep disappointment I have right now,” Agbeko said. “This fight is everything to me, everything I have worked for my whole career. To have this opportunity taken away from me is devastating.”

Agbeko is promoted by Don King, who had yet to arrive in Los Angeles when the injury occurred.

“It is very unfortunate for this man to work as hard and as successfully as he has to not have the opportunity this weekend to prove he is the best bantamweight boxer in the world,” King said. “This is beyond human control. God has the final say.”

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