

Andre Ward Likens Abrama To Miranda

Written by The Sweet Science
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OAKLAND, CALIF. (April 28, 2011) - Super Six World Boxing Classic Semifinalists and WBA 168-pound champion Andre Ward hosted a media day and workout with his trainer Virgil Hunter and promoter Dan Goossen on Thursday in Ward's hometown of Oakland as he gets ready for his Semifinals showdown against Arthur Abraham on Saturday, May 14 at The Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif., live on SHOWTIME®.

Ward will defend his WBA Super Middleweight title against the European superstar and former world champion to kick off the Semifinals of the groundbreaking tournament. The Ward-Abraham winner advances to the tournament Finals against the winner of the Carl Froch-Glen Johnson Semifinals showdown. The winner earns instant bragging rights as the world's No. 1 168-pound fighter.

The talented Ward (23-0, 13 KOs), of Oakland, Calif., has emerged as the tournament favorite after impressive triumphs in Group Stage bouts over Mikkel Kessler and Allan Green, as well as Sakio Bika.

The event is co-promoted by Goossen Tutor Promotions, Antonio Leonard Productions and Sauerland Event and sponsored by Corona.

Tickets are available for as low as \$25, with VIP floor seats priced at \$200. Other tickets in the 8,000-seat outdoor stadium at The Home Depot Center are available at \$50 and \$100. Fans can purchase tickets at all Ticketmaster outlets and online at www.Ticketmaster.com as well as The Home Depot Center Box Office (open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.). Groups of 10 or more can purchase tickets by calling 1-877-234-8425.

In a non-televised undercard bout, heavyweight world contender and popular Southern California slugger Chris Arreola will try to stay on track for another opportunity of a world championship when he takes on Nagy Aguilera.

What Ward and Goossen had to say on Thursday: In reference to Sauerland's statement that the Ward-Abraham fight is in jeopardy: WARD: "It's news to me yesterday. That's why I have my promoter with me today and I am sure that it is all going to get worked out. There will be a fight. There's definitely going to be a fight. No fight, nobody makes any money. So I think they'll get it worked out."

On his belief that the original plan of neutral officials and judges will take place: WARD: "Absolutely. "Dan has said it many times and I have said many times. I know people think that I have some dealing behind the scenes, setting everything up where it's just right for Andre Ward but I have nothing to say about that, I have no say in that. That is why I have a promoter. That's the promoter's job to negotiate and deal and do whatever they are going to do. There should be fair judges, they'll get it worked out."

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DAN GOOSSEN: "If there were no California Officials Andre wouldn't say anything. All we want is to get out there and fight. Even fighting at home, it's never been a situation where Andre has said we have to fight at home. After the Kessler fight Green wanted to fight out here because he made a lot of money. Bika was the same situation, he made a lot of money fighting out here. These other guys didn't have any homes so it wasn't to protect Andre Ward and keep him at close quarters; it was just the way the situation evolved.

"In other words, we have done everything that we are supposed to do and lived up to and that is what we will continue to do. Now it's just up to Sauerland and the Commission to work it out and that's final."

Ward on the Sauerland situation:

WARD: "They made a comment saying that King Arthur has no problem with coming into my backyard, and they should know that my backyard is about 5 to 6 hours away from Carson, California. Let's not make Arthur Abraham out to be the hero where he is doing us the favor because he is coming here. They are allowing Arthur Abraham to come to this venue for a specific reason and I think we all know what that is - the Armenian population. They feel like they will have the advantage there and then it's about the money. So they are not doing us the favor. This is a co-promotion; this is something that they've agreed to. There were other venues available on the east coast. I was excited about going there to Atlantic City, possibly Portland and a few others. So it didn't have to be California, they wanted it to be here just as much as my side did."

On Andre's apparent willingness to fight globally (judging from his Olympic days and his past fight record)

WARD: "People have to talk about something on the website and blogs. Me fighting at home is something that people continue to talk about, it's not something I really pay a lot of attention to because I know how I got to this point and it certainly wasn't fighting in Oakland. I have only had 4 fights out in Oakland and let's not even talk about my amateur career. I am well schooled with fighting on the road, but again I think it was an awesome thing to be able to fight at home and we are looking to come back home and even make it bigger than it has been."

On not changing his gameplan and the expectations for him to succeed:

WARD: "Absolutely. I have to stay like that because there is a lot of talk about what Arthur has left. Either they say his back is against the wall and he's hungry so look out or they say this is going to be just a fight where that Ward is going to walk through him. I can't believe that, I can't believe either way. I have to prepare for each fight the same way, very methodically, mentally. I am expecting the best out of Abraham come May 14."

On what Arthur Abraham will look like on May 14 and the problems he represents:

WARD: "The problems he represents remains to be seen, but his strengths are he believes in his punching power. They call him a puncher, they say that he hits hard and that he is physically very strong, but I believe that my physical strength is right up there with the best ever and I think he will see and notice that I hit a lot harder than what people perceive me to be. With that being said, it's going to be the same Arthur Abraham,

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in terms of stylistically - he's going to cover up and maybe open up a little bit earlier, but he is going to look for that one big shot, that's what he does."

On whether Arthur Abraham is similar to any other opponent that Ward has faced:

WARD: "Not really, but in terms of just being a big puncher and believing in his power, I can liken him to Edison Miranda. Not defensively, but in terms of looking for that one big shot all night long. Miranda is probably the main guy that I can compare him to."

On how Ward plans to approach Abraham knowing that he is waiting for an opening:

WARD: "We do what we gotta do. We don't get caught up in his game. I know that if he lands a shot on me, I believe that I can take it. "Also, we have been working for the last several months to not let him land anything, so we don't change anything. We got the right sparring partners in here who fight as similar as they possibly can to Arthur Abrahams' style. They're wild, strong and coming and I am doing what I got to do to prepare for this kind of fight."

On the probability of Ward not fighting the same way he fought his fights against Bika and Green:

WARD: "I don't know. I think that you are going to see a little bit of everything. I have said that the last two fights because that is just my style. My style is adapting and doing what the other opponent doesn't believe that I am going to do.

We don't have a fear factor in our camp where we're going to be running away from Arthur Abraham, that's not the case. He's a 168 pound man and so am I. He's a former world champion and I am the current world champion. He wants to get a world title again and I want to defend my title. I am going to conduct myself accordingly. So, in other worlds, I am going to be myself and do what I gotta do."

Upon being asked if he is just as hungry to keep his championship status:

WARD: "I believe so. It's just kind of the way I am wired. I love to win and I know that you just can't love to win; you have to do what it takes in preparation to win. Unless I have done all that I can do, leaving my family, sacrificing, putting in the physical work and doing the mental work exercises - just everything that it takes to get ready for a championship fight. When we get out there we do what we do and we have fun and we let the chips fall where they fall."

On his champion status and putting in the work to stay a champion:

WARD: "We don't really have a championship training camp, I am not the center of attention here. My coach doesn't pat me on the back everyday that I come in and tell me how great I am. You would think that I was still a young guy coming up in terms of preparation. Mentally and physically, if you listen to some of the things we talk about while doing the mitts and the drill you would think, 'man, give this guy a little credit.' But my coach is always asking for more and pushing me because he knows and he wants me to be a great fighter someday and in order to do that I can't settle for just being good. This is always a camp where we are pushing, reaching and trying to do better."

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On ways he can improve:

WARD: "It's hard to pinpoint one thing. I don't like to pinpoint one thing because there are people reading these articles that I could possibly fight one day, but there is always something to work on whether it's small, big, maybe something mental. There is just always something and that is something that Virg (trainer Virgil Hunter) is awesome at - he pinpoints it, he sees it, and he knows how to push that button to get me motivated in that area."

On not getting complacent: "That is the least of my worries. If anything, Virg is always pulling me back saying, 'That's enough. We still got three weeks left, we still got two weeks left. Hey, we're not going to leave it all in the road or we're not going to leave it all in the gym.' He just wants me to continue to grow and not settle being a good fighter. I don't feel like I am at my best, I feel like I am approaching my prime."

On Abraham's last two losses being a blue print for Ward:

WARD:"I think it is going to be similar in some ways but I think it's going to have my own flair and my own special touch to it. I think Froch did an awesome job, I think Dirrell did an awesome job and believe that I am going to do an awesome job, but I am just going to do it my way. The way Froch and Dirrell did it is definitely a foundation and something to look at, study it and say this is somewhere to start."

On the expectation of Arthur Abraham coming out blazing: "The only problem with that is that it's a 12 round fight. If he tries that we have to have an answer, if he lays back and waits we have to have an answer, so when you have seven or eight weeks to sit down and prepare you're supposed to go over every possibly scenario. But then it comes to a point where it's not about what he's going to do, it's about what we're going to do. That's when the mind set shifts and two-and-a-half weeks before the fight is where I am at right now. It's not about what Arthur is going to do or how many fans will be there in the arena. I am going to be mentally locked in. I wont hear anything that night. That's all I am focused on."

When asked if he is winding down since it is two weeks before the fight:

WARD:"Not quite yet, we're still working hard. We have to be careful not to just leave it on the road and want to push harder when you run or push harder in the gym. You just have to really be sensitive and that's why it's awesome to have a coach that not only knows boxing but knows you, and Virg knows me extremely well. You know, there are days I get up mad and I am ready to push and he says we're not doing that this morning, just meet me at the gym at this time. And those are the types of things that he brings to the camp and really allows me to peak at the right time."

On the Andre Ward-Sugar Ray Leonard comparison:

WARD: "I appreciate the comparison but I feel that I got a lot of work to do to be in that company. I got a lot of work to do but I appreciate even the smallest comparison."

On being able to adjust during a fight:

WARD: "That's something that's really evolving in my game is adjusting on the fly. We like game plans, but I am not really a game plan type of guy. We'll have a general game plan but at the same time things happen so fast in a fight and you

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have to make split-second decisions and Virg allows me to make those decisions. I can give you an example: the Allen Green fight. We weren't going to fight that type of fight that soon, it just happened. That was a fight that was going to happen on the other side of six but it happened starting in the second round. I thought, 'Man, he's letting me do this to him inside.' So I stayed there and Virg adjusted and said, 'If you are going to be there, this is what I need you to do.' So, yeah that is something that is evolving as well is the ability to adjust."

On the heavy Armenian population and the possibility of being the one that is booed on May 14: WARD: "Just buy a ticket and tune in. It's all good. Just buy a ticket. Tune in, that's all we are concerned about. I could be but I feel like there will be a lot of Bay Area people in the house. I got fans in Southern California. I think it could be even. His fans could be there but I am going to be mentally locked in."

About Virgil not taking it soft on Andre: WARD: "It's never been like that. I don't think he knows how to do that and sometimes it can get to you. You know, we have our moments but that's to be expected. At the end of the day it's always love and we always understand each other, but you know, trust me, we have our moments in there where I am saying, 'Hey Man, listen. What now? and Virgil will tell me, "you can be one of the greatest fighters who ever did this and I am going to get that out of you.' So I have to respect that and honor that."

If Andre is trying to get Abraham on the defensive? WARD: "Absolutely. The key is to remind him of all those fights that he had and all the ways that he felt after. He really didn't believe that he put on a bad performance against Dirrell because of the way that it ended. He felt that that he was coming on and that Dirrell quit. Carl Froch, he couldn't deny that. My job is to remind him of the Carl Froch fight as soon as possible. We're gonna set the tone. We're going to be smart about it and set the tone."

On his power:

WARD: "Some guys talk about my power or lack of power before the fight but if you look at the top guys that I fought from Miranda on out, none of these guys have said anything after the fight and I think that is key because they were able to get in there and feel it for themselves."

On his inclusion in the top 10 pound-for-pound Ring list:

WARD: "Unbelievable. I don't have time to get caught up in it at the moment, but that's just unbelievable. I've looked at that list for years and years and years and years and wanted to be at the very top of it. To be No. 10 is awesome and I thank everyone for their votes. Some people think that I shouldn't be on there, some people believe I should. I just want to continue to work hard and show that I am worthy to be on there. It's about putting in the work. It always goes back to Kobe, Kobe Bryant."

WARD: "I love sports but what I watch, I like to watch the best and I like to watch their mindset when they're winning, when they're down. I just wan to follow these guys, I want to watch them

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and I want to read them. I have watched Kobe for many, many years. People say what they want to about him but the guy is a beast. He's a competitor. The only time you see him smile is when his team has secured a victory and there's about two or three minutes left or maybe a minute left and they're up by 15 and the game is over. This guy has plenty of credentials, he's got plenty of honor, plenty of rings, but he's still got something to prove and I liken myself to him in that respect.

"It's just something that, I don't know if you're born with it, I don't know if you can teach it but I have always been like this. I want to win. I like to win. That's my mind set. I don't know if you can teach it, it's just in me. I don't believe that I am the most talented guy. Although, I have been boxing since I was 9 years old and there are thing that I can do in my sleep. Personally, I don't feel like I am a Floyd Mayweather type that could do certain things without even trying. I feel like I work hard to accomplish certain things and I am always working on the basics. I just don't want to be out worked. I do know that God has given me some internal attributes and I just want to tell him thank you by working hard everyday and giving it all I got."