

Part 2, Ward Interview: Ward Models Self on Floyd, Talks About "Lack" of Power

Written by Raymond Markarian
Friday, 23 December 2011 11:04



When meeting the five other original participants of the Super Six Tournament for the first time during a press conference in Germany, Andre Ward glanced at the opposition and liked his chances. At that point he knew he'd win. Now, two years later, Ward sits on top of the 168 pound division and near the top of many boxing pound for pound lists. Ward says getting to this point didn't happen by accident and without anxiety. There was plenty of pressure and he hears the doubters, yet stays focused.

In part two of our interview with Andre Ward, the champ reveals how he can improve, when he expects to get back in the ring, and chats about his mental make-up before a fight.

RM: Before a fight with Kessler, Bute, or any other top fighter, would you want to take a tune up

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at either 168 or 175?

AW: I think in the next few weeks we will have a better idea or direction of where we are trying to go. Basically all I know is that I want to come back in April or May. I don't know where even. I don't know if it's going to be in Oakland or in Vegas. That is a tentative date that we've talked about. I do have to get my hand checked out. It isn't broken but there is a lot of swelling. Other than that, I plan on coming back in April or May. (Note: Ward said Thursday that x-rays showed multiple fractures, which existed coming in to the fight, but were made worse on fightnight, in round six. He will be in a cast for two weeks.)

RM: OK. I liked the way you handled the Froch victory. It was business as usual, as if you expected to win. Did you expect to be in this place at this point in your career, 27 years-old, undefeated super middleweight champion, and probably fighter of the year?

AW: Yes and no. I say yes because once we got in the tournament I honestly felt like we won it. I know it was a long shot on paper and I understood a lot of people didn't expect me to win. Even though I respected those opinions, I let them fuel me, not to prove them wrong but to keep grinding and put in the work to be in this position. When I came to a Germany for the first press conference because I missed the one in New York I looked at every fighter there, I sized them up you know. I knew their background. I knew their history. I felt like we could win it, Ray. But you only know so much. Being recognized as the fighter of the year at this age is something I didn't imagine. When I got the word that Sports Illustrated voted me Fighter of the Year it was unbelievable. That is just hard to comprehend. It really is. There are a lot of fighters in the world, a lot of good fighters. And to be considered the best fighter for a whole year is saying a great deal. I am just thankful.

RM: I hear you.

AW: I am just thankful, man. I really am. And that is how I felt Saturday night. By no means did I want to rub it in Froch's face. I wanted to remain classy and give him credit where it's due and just relish this moment for a while. Then get ready to get back on the horse because we still have a lot of road up ahead.

RM: So what's next?

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AW: I am looking forward to what's next. But we are going to celebrate and enjoy this awesome victory. This is not just for me. This is for my team. And I did not want to disappoint anybody. A lot of people who sat at the press conference were emotionally invested into this tournament and also this fight. The way Froch talked, sometimes he disrespected me personally. My family members, my wife, my church, my pastor, they were fired up about this moment. A lot of people were invested in this emotionally. My manager, you know just everybody. People that helped me get ready. I just wanted everybody to leave happy. I wanted everybody to be pleased. To see everybody smiling and happy after we got our hand raised was all I needed to see. I was happier for them than I was for myself.

RM: So how do you handle the outside pressure beforehand? I noticed you get a little edgy before fights naturally because you are getting mentally and physically ready. But how do you handle the extra stress from these people who not only want you to win but expect you to win?

AW: I try to do the best that I can. I try to put it in, Ray, like nobody else, whether it's dieting, running, conditioning, or training. And my faith is tremendous. When I read my Bible and get close to God with all of the chaos going on around me, it helps me understand that certain things are out of my hands. I did all that I was supposed to do. Now the fight is in God's hands. My mindset is like this. Win or lose, I just want to glorify you. And of course I want to win. That is what I am there for. But I just want to glorify God the right way. When you have that mindset, even though there is a lot of pressure you realize that it is out of your hands. I look back and draw strength from the fact that I am here for a reason. Why? Well, I didn't get this far for no reason. Look at the victories that I've had. All of the victories I had before prepared me for Saturday night. You don't prepare for a fight like this past Saturday night in eight weeks or ten weeks. It takes years of preparation. It takes over a decade of honing your skills. So I look back and draw strength from the fact that I've put in all the work. I have done all I am supposed to do. Come fight night it is just time to perform. I have done it over 100 times as an amateur and 25 times as a pro. You get to a point where the tension and pressure is out there. But one or two weeks before the fight you just get in the zone.

RM: What kind of zone?

AW: There are so many people around you. There are people talking about the fight around that have their opinions and try to help as much as possible. But I am in a whole other zone because I know that I am the one that is getting in there and I know what I have to do. It is hard to explain. But the best way I could explain it is just being in the zone. And you get to that place by

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being in camp for eight weeks and years of preparation behind it. Eating certain foods, being away from your family, going to bed at the same time every night, all that stuff combined over an eight week period will have you in the right mindset before a fight.

RM: You said you haven't hit your prime yet. How can you improve?

AW: I think there is another level of relaxation in the ring that I could go to. I like to use Floyd as an example. We have a lot of similarities. If you look at the Floyd at 130, 135 pounds versus the Floyd now at 147. Floyd moved a lot early on in his career, used a lot more energy. You know, he still won and looked good but still had a lot of youthfulness in him. Now you see this seasoned older fighter who does just enough. He moves just enough and does just what he has to do. He is in another realm right now simply because of the age and experience. I think that I am getting to that point now. In my earlier fights you might have seen more movement and energy. Slowly but surely I am starting to settle down more. You know, I relax in the ring. But there is a different level of relaxation at 28, 29, 30, or 31 years-old. You get to a certain realm where it gets easy. I feel like I am approaching that realm right now. I don't feel like I am there yet. But I feel like I am approaching it. I am more efficient. That comes with experience in big fights against good fighters and overcoming things. We were able to overcome something that we never had to overcome before, a hurt hand in a fight against a tough fighter. Everything was on the line. So it is hard to say when I will hit my prime but I want to continue to fight good fighters and learn on the job. After this fight I will be better. It is going to make me a better fighter. And I am looking forward to getting in the ring regardless of who it is against because I know there will be improvements.

RM: So what do you say to people that doubt your knockout power?

AW: Well, if you look back at this tournament, there has only been one knockout. The Jermain Taylor-Arthur Abraham fight. It is not easy to knock out 'A' level competition. But if the guys I am fighting thought I couldn't punch they would have walked right through me. I know for a fact that Froch felt my punches. I could see it in his eyes when he got hit. Froch made plenty of comments about my punching power before the fight but he didn't say anything about it during the press conference afterwards. He said I couldn't punch before we got in there. But he didn't say anything about that after we got out of the ring. It's a different story. So I don't really buy into it, Ray. I know what I got in there. There is always going to be someone to pick you apart. Oh, you move too much. Oh, you did this or did that. There is always going to be something. To be honest with you I really don't pay much attention to it anymore. I mean, we must be doing something right.

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RM: Good point. Ok, Andre, thank you for your time as always. Are you taking to any vacations during the holidays?

AW: Yeah, we are going to get out of here. We have some media stuff coming up. At some point we have to fly down to Mexico City and get the WBC belt.

RM: Oh really? You have to go there to get it?

AW: Yeah, we have to go to Mexico City. I don't like to go on vacation without the hardware. I like taking the hardware with me. It's a great feeling especially when you just win.

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serious2020 says:

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This is one of the few interviews of Andre Ward that I actually like. It is balanced. The questions make sense, and I've actually learned things that I didn't know before I wrote and submitted my own article.

I have had the privilege of photographing / writing about all of Andre Ward's fights during the Super Six World Boxing Classic, and have watched him train since before the 2004 Olympics. I will now read the 1st part of the interview as well.

Radam G says:

Nice! Nuff spitted! Holla!

MisterLee says:

Andre Ward is the Truth!

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DaveB says:

He seems like someone you would like to know.

MisterLee says:

Hope Markarian gets a BWAA for his coverage of ward! Fo' sho!

ali says:

Ward is a faster B-Hop and that's scary..