He's young and tall, fast and strong and has the ability to move to greater heights if he can beat former Olympic gold medal winner Andre Ward.

It's a tough assignment for Roger Cantrell.

"I never thought I'd fight him," said Cantrell, 21. "I think he's going to have a great career, but not in this weight class."

Confidence is a great equalizer and Cantrell (12-0, 8 KOs) puts it to the ultimate test Friday night against the undefeated fleet-footed Ward (13-0, 8 KOs) at St. Lucia in a super middleweight fight promoted by Goossen-Tutor Promotions. The fight will be televised on Showtime.

"He's not as strong as me," said Cantrell of Ward. "I don't think he can throw combinations with me."

Cantrell, a Sioux Indian living in Oregon, has never tasted defeat. Though a large portion of the boxing world would not recognize most of his opponents, he has run into and defeated a couple of unfriendly fighters like Marcus Pernell and Jonathan Corn with a slam-bam style that has won him popularity in the Northwest.

The lanky Cantrell fights like a grizzled warrior and uses that wiry strength to fight inside or outside. When opponents get hit by his punches they have this queer look as if they just missed their bus ride.

"People always underestimate me," said Cantrell, a friendly and bright-eyed youngster who anxiously accepted the chance to meet the more decorated Ward. "Andre Ward is going to be surprised and sorry he took this fight."

It's going to be a different atmosphere for both Cantrell and Ward. Fighting in an island paradise is not a usual occurrence and it's the first time the tiny nation has exhibited its sandy beaches and first rate hotel and casino to an American national audience.

"It's going to be fantastic," said Dan Goossen, president of Goossen-Tutor Promotions.

Fantastic is the word expressed by boxing experts when they first glimpsed the athletic talent of Oakland, California's Ward. After showing off his Sugar Ray Leonard-like hand-speed many tabbed the fighter as a sure boxing star. But things don't always happen quickly even if you win the gold medal.

Ward was the only American boxer to win that precious gold medal in Greece on a team that also featured Vicente Escobedo, Rock Allen, Andre Dirrell and Vanes Martirosyan.

“It was a great moment for me,” said Ward, 23, whose speed and agility has enabled him to remain undefeated after 13 pro fights.

But boxing fans expect quick results from its gold medal winners.

Fighters like Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Michael Spinks, Oscar De La Hoya and David Reid proceeded to win professional world titles within four years of winning the gold medal. So the same is expected of Ward.

Every fighter has his own timetable says Ward’s camp.

“He last lost when he was 13 years old,” said Ward’s trainer Virgil Hunter. “The theory is he’s never been tested or pressed.”

Ward was knocked down by slick fighting Darnell Boone and has been stunned a few times in other fights. Other than that, Ward has streaked to an undefeated record but has been carefully matched.

Yet he does possess that blazing hand speed that can shock opponents.

“He knows his terrain,” said Hunter.

This past July, Francisco Diaz looked like he had touched a high voltage tension wire after tasting a Ward blow.

Expected to hit and run from the bigger and talented Diaz, the Oakland fighter stood his ground and effectively worked right in the wheelhouse of his opponent. A short left hook counter knocked Diaz out in staggering fashion.

“We’ve been working on that,” said Ward calmly after the fight in front of a California audience. “I was surprised it ended early.”

Goossen expects a memorable war between the two super middleweights.

“This is what boxing is all about,” said Goossen. “They’re both very confident.”

Cantrell’s team believes their fighter is a notch above Ward’s former opponents.

“We know that Andre is very hard to figure out so we’re going to fight our own way,” said Bill Hines who trains Cantrell. “Roger does not lose.”

Though Ward has the Olympic pedigree, he’s not cocky.

“He seems very confident and doesn’t give up,” said Ward. “At this level I never feel any fight is going to be easy. He’s a dangerous fighter.”

Cantrell can’t believe his luck

“I’m so excited,” Cantrell confesses. “Not too long ago I was essentially living out of my car and now I’m fighting an Olympian.”

Look out paradise.