

VIRGIL HUNTER Q n A, Pt 1: "Chad Dawson Is The Better Boxer"

Written by Raymond Markarian
Tuesday, 04 September 2012 11:58



Hunter (right) likes that Dawson is full-on confident, because that will make a win that much sweeter. (Hogan Photos)

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Before important fights like the one Andre Ward and Chad Dawson are about to have on September 8th in Oakland, CA for the Ward's super middleweight championship, it is hard to tell the difference between pride and trash talk. No matter how much respect the combatants have for each other during the lead up, there are always insults thrown back in forth. And Andre Ward's trainer Virgil Hunter knows about mental manipulation.

Hunter says Chad Dawson is a better boxer than his fighter Andre Ward but explains why boxing ability is not enough to win. Only a trainer like Hunter can follow compliment with criticism so gracefully. Hunter, the boxing master, uses doubt to infiltrate the mind of an opponent, forcing a foe to question their confidence. It is a beautiful sight watching Hunter work. And with us, as usual, the 2011 BWAA Trainer of the Year held no punches.

Read closely as Virgil Hunter twists the strategy of Chad Dawson into a cocoon of insignificance.

In part one of our two-part interview on Thursday night, Hunter compares Andre Ward to Barry Bonds, touches on the apparent catch-weight issue, and explains the beauty of Chad Dawson's self-assurance.

RM: Hey Virgil, I notice Dawson's team talking through the media about Andre. They mention catch weights and their willingness to make this fight by any means necessary. Does it feel like your opponents are always justifying themselves? Why do you think Dawson's camp is expressing themselves through the media?

VH: You mean how they talk about the catch weight and all that kind of stuff?

RM: Yeah.

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VH: Well, it's the same old story. Everyone thinks they can beat Andre. But they don't know what they are looking for. Most of the time the trainers and fighters look at what the other guy should have been doing. But they don't really pay attention to what Andre's doing. So they try to minimize the opponents we fight. For instance, Carl Froch constantly emphasized his level of competition and Chad is doing the same. Chad is saying that he'd beat the guys we fought. But he lost to a guy that Carl Froch beat (Jean Pascal.) And he had a lot of difficulty with Jean Pascal. If Pascal didn't get tired, it would have been a convincing unanimous decision victory. You can say Dawson was winning that last round before the fight was stopped, but that was only one round. But I think we are on the right track when our opponents continuously minimize us.

RM: Last week Dawson's trainer John Scully said that Andre doesn't make many adjustments in the ring. He thinks Ward's opponents adjust to him. Do you think Scully's statement is accurate?

VH: No, it's not accurate because adjustments to me work both ways. If I make another fighter fight my fight then I made adjustments. Making adjustments doesn't mean I have to change what I am doing. The ability to make adjustments means I have the ability to make you change up what you are doing. So along those lines, I think he was kind of missing the epitome of the word adjustment.

RM: So, Andre makes adjustments to stay a step ahead?

VH: Well, we make adjustments for each opponent.

RM: So what are Andre's advantages over his opponent?

VH: I think it's his ability to process what his opponent wants to do. If you want to talk about advantages, Chad is a great boxer. He has fast hands, and throws good combinations. But his ability to process—which is crucial in the ring-- is where he falls short. You know, Andre's ability to process is really second to none. His overall punch stat numbers proves it. He has an excellent IQ in the ring. See, this is what people miss out on; they tend to look more at the physical part of the fight as opposed to the mental. Andre is just able to process better.

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RM: So, Andre's ability to process will be the difference in the fight?

VH: It's going to be one of the advantages he has in the fight.

RM: I see.

VH: They did a study on Barry Bonds a while back and concluded that he picks up a pitch maybe two tenths of a second quicker than the average hitter. That means Bonds recognized a pitch 10 or 20 feet faster than everyone else. Andre has that ability in the ring. He has the ability to process and pick up what he needs to do and react to it. That makes him look beatable because it makes it look like the other guy is not doing what he is supposed to do.

RM: I see what you are saying. Do you think that Andre's instincts in the ring are God given?

VH: First and foremost, it's got to come from the crib. If you look at any exceptional athlete it comes at a young age. But you still have to work at it. I think it gives him a great advantage.

RM: So, do you think that Chad respects Andre's boxing ability?

VH: I don't think he respects his boxing ability much at all. He is saying all the things he is supposed to say. You have to understand that Chad is a great boxer. If you are going by the book, Chad is probably the better boxer. We are more into performance as opposed to one thing that sticks out. If you look at Chad, the first thing that sticks out is that he is great boxer. We prefer to stand out as a person that executes.

RM: I hear you.

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VH: I don't think Andre has one style. You can't pinpoint boxer on him. You can't input brawler on him. You can't put a style on him. He is like a chameleon. He will fight to adjust and pull the right tool out from the toolbox at the right time.

RM: How close are you to being ready for this fight?

VH: We are completely ready now. If the fight took place last week we'd have been ready to go.

RM: On 24/7 you were talking about having an imperfect training camp.

VH: Well, let me clarify that. You hear a lot of people say they had a perfect training camp, the sparring went perfect, and everything was perfect. I can't say that because each day presents it's own challenge. What we have to overcome on that particular day we'll overcome.

RM: OK. Chad Dawson also said he has every advantage in this fight... That's obviously not true in your opinion, correct?

VH: Well, a lot of the advantages that he thinks he has are really disadvantages. But I don't blame him for feeling confident going into this fight because he should feel that way. We don't feel that way. We don't feel like we have every advantage. The road we are going to take will be the necessary road to victory. Any advantages that he thinks he has will come into play immediately. Whether they exist or don't exist.

RM: Sounds like he has a lot of confidence.

VH: Well, it's just something he says and feels; you can't knock him for it. It's a beautiful thing that he is built that way.

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RM: Why?

VH: Because it feels good to come out victorious against a guy that is 100% confident, 100% sure that he is the better fighter. It puts a little cherry on top of a victory. And there is also the satisfaction of when he finds out during the fight that what he thought was an advantage-- is really a disadvantage. The bottom line is that Dawson says we've never seen a fighter like him. But you got to put the shoe on the other foot. He has never come across a fighter that can do the things Andre does. And when it comes to physical strength, I don't care who he works with, you know, he is not stronger than Andre Ward in a boxing ring. He might be stronger throwing a medicine ball around, or pushing a cable cord, or crunches. But in a boxing ring, he is going to find out real quick that he is not stronger than Andre.

RM: Well, that's what he does right? Chad likes to push people around with the jab and back them up.

VH: I understand. Yeah... well... He is not going to do that.

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deepwater says:

good interview. ward wins. ward has the chip on his shoulder and finds away to win. bad chad doesnt got the killer instict but can box and keep fight at distance. easy \$ on ward.

Radam G says:

SOG is gonna cut up SBC. You heard it here, FIRST! Ringing the words of da NY Puerto Rican Don. Whadup Don69? Why don't check in? Holla!

amayseng says:

great interview. sbc is a great boxer, very talented but he lull himself to a daze in that ring for some reason...

that is right, dude doesnt have that killer instinct.

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ward reminds me of bhop with his mental strength and technical adjustments, just too smart and too adaptive.

its a great matchup and a great thing to see two top guys finding a way to fight eachother when you have pac and mayweather terrified to cross the street by each other

the Roast says:

This is a boxing match. Ward will win a chess match like Sweet Pea Whitaker beat Buddy McGirt. Boxers gotta box. Ward UD 8-4.

MisterLee says:

Andre Ward 2013!