

Ward Is Back In The Ring..MARKARIAN

Written by Raymond Markarian
Friday, 04 November 2011 11:58



For the first time in over a month, super middleweight champion Andre Ward stepped in the boxing ring to continue his preparation for the Super Six Tournament Final against Carl Froch on December 17th. The fight was originally set for October 29th but postponed in September because of a cut Ward received in sparring over his right eye.

Ward boxed eight rounds on Wednesday, four rounds each against two sparring partners, and is back to what he likes to call “beast mode” at King’s Gym in Oakland, Ca. “I feel good. We were still doing road work,” Ward told me, referring to the nearly six-week hiatus outside the squared circle.

There were no signs of scar tissue from the cut that needed seven stitches above the right eye and he was not favoring it in the ring from my point of view. It looked like business as usual.

Virgil Hunter, Ward’s trainer said, “If the fight was next week we’d be ready. We are going to stop Froch. Put money on it.”

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The 58-year-old former probation officer told me that he was not pleased with the way Carl Froch and his camp reacted to Ward's injury. Immediately after news broke of the cut, Froch blasted Ward claiming a lack of professionalism on Ward's part.

Hunter sat with TSS to discuss the Froch mindset, his popularity in Europe, and Ward's first day back in the ring.

Ray Markarian: Now that you guys are back into full training mode. What has changed since Andre got injured?

Virgil Hunter: Well, he has picked up the focus where he is supposed to mentally. Anytime you go through a situation and somebody ridicules you for the natural things that occur in boxing by throwing way off comments about different things, is only going to give Andre the necessary fuel. That is what I have noticed most.

RM: How do you feel about Andre's training today?

VH: He is on point. He looks like he fought Abraham yesterday. He is coming out of the garage from an injury. And you seen it yourself, he didn't even take a breath.

RM: In what way does Froch's camp doubt you?

VH: Well I am talking about the cut. It is bad enough to get cut. But then to have somebody make their little comments about how we should have handled it. You know, we don't have to tell Eddie Hearn or Carl Froch anything. They have their own definition of professionalism. When they found out (about the injury) they were upset about it and made their comments. But like I said, their definition of professionalism is very different from ours.

RM: Did the Froch camp contact your team personally?

VH: No, they just love the airwaves, man. Froch loves the spotlight. He doesn't get that much publicity over there in England. I don't know why he is not well liked. He seems like a cool guy. For some reason his own countrymen have him on the black list. I think some of the comments he made about Joe Calzaghe, who is an icon over there, has something to do with it. Rightfully so, you don't disrespect the man who paved the way for you. You can't knock Joe Calzaghe, Nigel Benn, and some of the other middleweights or super middleweights from Europe and expect fans to embrace you. They paved the way for Froch. So when you get a platform, don't badmouth the guy that made the division exciting and made fans interested in you. Show respect. Calzaghe already made a legacy. If he fights you he fights you. If he doesn't he doesn't. All of his talk proves nothing.

RM: Froch does a lot of talking no doubt. How do you think Andre Ward deals with the trash talk?

VH: I don't think it is going to affect his intensity. Andre is going to be he who he is. But at the same time, Carl Froch is going to find out a lot about Andre Ward come December 17th. I know Eddie Hearn said 'Froch is going take Andre to places that he has never been before.' But you know Andre is one passenger that Froch is going to really want to get rid of as quick as possible. He is going to want to drop him off at the nearest corner. Because wherever they go will be an unpleasant ride. We are willing to go places that we have never been.

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RM: Can you give me a place that you have never gone before?

VH: They seem to have a place in mind. We will go with them. And we will be a terrible passenger.

RM: You told me earlier that Andre is going to stop Carl Froch on December 17th. Can you elaborate?

VH: Andre is going to stop Carl Froch. I will show why after the fight. Let me put it like this, if Carl Froch is the fighter that he says he is, we are going to stop him. Now when it gets going rough Froch might be like all the rest of them, Abraham, Kessler, Green, when they start fighting to protect themselves or survive, they are hard to stop. We might not stop him if he fights to survive. But if Carl Froch is the fighter that he says he is and there is no quit in him, he is a gallant warrior, a beast, and things go bad for him, I expect him to keep fighting. If he keeps fighting he is going to get stopped.

RM: Do you have a special method for Mr. Froch?

VH: No. I actually like Carl and his wife. I have met them. He is a good guy. I am speaking strictly from a boxing point of view. I am not personal. He is who he is. He does have a little bravado. But if that's what he needs to get fueled up so be it. After the fight is over it is not going to be personal. I wish him and his family well in life. They have not done anything wrong to us. He is doing what he feels like he needs to do for the fight. So this is all pertaining to the fight.

RM: Do you study his fights?

VH: Well, without disclosing the opponents, there are three fights that I watch in particular. I watch him on an average of four to five times a week.

RM: Really, you just watch the three fights?

VH: I just watch his fights with three particular guys.

RM: OK so now that everything is back on schedule. What is coming up in the next few weeks?

VH: Well, we have some great sparring coming. I don't want to disclose the participants but a couple of them are world ranked fighters. And because we had a camp for the original fight date, we are already conditioned. The eye didn't stop us from conditioning or drilling and things like that. So actually, it is a good thing because we could have more rest days. If the fight was next week we'd be ready to go.

RM: Any fear of over training?

VH: We never over train.

RM: No?

VH: I have never bought into some of the methods that certain fighters have. We have never over trained. He gets a lot of rest.

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