CABAZON, Calif. (Dec. 29, 2011) – Two of the most recognizable names in boxing will make their long-awaited returns to the ring **tomorrow**, **Dec. 30**, when **Jermain Taylor** and **Andre Dirrell** are featured in separate 10-round fights on a special edition of ***ShoBox: The New Generation*** live on

SHOWTIME
®
(11 p.m. ET/PT, delayed on the West Coast) at
Morongo Casino Resort & Spa
in
Cabazon
,
Calif
.

Taylor, (28-4-1, 17 KOs), of Little Rock, Ark., is a former undisputed middleweight champion who'll be making his first start in 26 months when he meets **Jessie Nicklow** (22-2-3, 8 KOs) of Baltimore, Md., in the main event of a tripleheader. It will be Taylor's first fight since losing to
Arthur Abraham
in the
Super
Six World Boxing Classic
on Oct. 17, 2009.

Dirrell (19-1, 13 KOs), of Flint, Mich., hasn't fought since March 27, 2010, when he won by 11th-round disqualification over Abraham in the Super Six World Boxing Classic. Dirrell's first fight in 21 months will be against
Darryl Cunningham
(24-2, 10 KOs), of Detroit, who has won 17 in-a-row.

In the opening bout of the telecast, former Cuban amateur standout **Luis "El Leon" Garcia** (11-0, 9 KOs) of Cork, Ireland, makes his United States debut when he takes on southpaw
Alexander
"The Great"
Johnson
(12-0, 5 KOs, 1 NC) of Oxon Hill, Md., in an eight-round showdown of undefeated light heavyweights.

Garcia, who turned 24 on Dec. 23, is a former world amateur champion. Johnson outpointed previously unbeaten **Farah Ennis** (17-0 going in) two starts ago on April 2, 2011.

What the fighters said Thursday:

JERMAIN TAYLOR

“I feel totally different today than I ever have the day of the weigh-in before a fight. I’m not irritable. I didn’t have to dry out. I feel calm and at peace.

“I feel so different because finally, for the first time, I did it right. I put in the hours training in the gym. I did my job and worked hard. I don’t have to drop a bunch of weight. I ate pasta the other night, steak and eggs the other morning. I never could do that before.

“This is the first time I can say that I am entering a fight knowing that I’m in shape. I’m ready to fight.’’

JESSIE NICKLOW

“I know why they want to fight me. They think I’m too small, that I’m a natural junior middleweight. But they’re making a big mistake. I’m not a steppingstone.

“I’m really confident for this. I don’t think Taylor has that confidence. He’s been off two years.

I've had four fights, two this year, but I've never been out of the gym. I definitely feel I can stay close (inside) and fight my style of fight

"My game plan is always the same – to hit my opponent in the face. I'm not changing anything just because I'm fighting a former world champion. Let's see what he's got to offer. I know what I'm bringing.

"I'm really looking forward to this.''

ANDRE DIRRELL

"I have never felt as excited for a fight since I turned pro. I'm really psyched up.

"There's going to be ring rust, of course. I just don't want to show it. I've trained really hard. I trained through the holidays. It all begins again for me Friday night.

"I want to win, look good, and then go after all the super middleweights. I'm not ducking anybody. I will fight any of the 168-pounders in the world except for my brother, **Anthony**. People want to see me and
Andre Ward
fight. All I can continue to say is that that fight will definitely happen.''

DARRYL CUNNINGHAM

“I’m going to have fun. I appreciate Team Dirrell giving me the opportunity to showcase my skills, and I will showcase my skills on Friday.

“This is such a great opportunity. I just can’t lose and not take advantage of it.

“Lots of people have never given me my due. They look where I come from, my background, the fact my Dad’s a pastor. They’ve always said the “Church Boy” couldn’t make it in boxing because he was too nice a guy and too much of a family man.

“This is my chance to prove them, and everybody else wrong.’’

LUIS GARCIA

“It’s always been my dream to fight in the U.S., and I’m very excited that now it is happening and that it is on SHOWTIME.

“I really want to win and leave a good impression so I can fight in the states all the time. I don’t know anything about the guy I’m fighting. What I do know is that I will give my best.’’

ALEXANDER JOHNSON

“This is a great opportunity for me, fighting on SHOWTIME on such a great card like this. I am determined to come in and show what I am made of and what I can do.

“He may be a bigger name and have the credentials, but that all changes tomorrow.

“After tomorrow, when someone mentions my name, the question isn’t going to be, “who is he?’’

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

It is almost SHHOOOOOOOOWTIMMMEEEE! Holla!

ali says:

Im rooting for Taylor and Dirrell...