

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38



All eight fighters participating in “**Four Warned**,” the upcoming **June 2 Quadrupleheader** live on

SHOWTIME

®

(9 p.m. ET/PT) from
The Home Depot Center
in
Carson, Calif.

, participated in media conference calls on Wednesday and Thursday as they prepare for next week’s bouts.

Wednesday’s call featured **Antonio “Magic Man” Tarver, Lateef “Power” Kayode, Vusi “Marvelous” Malinga, Leo “Terremoto” Santa Cruz**

, Kayode’s

Hall of Fame trainer

Freddie Roach

and Tarver’s trainer

Jimmy Williams

Thursday’s call featured **Winky Wright, Peter “Kid Chocolate” Quillin, Austin “No Doubt” Trout** and **Delvin “El Peligro” Rodriguez**.

“**Four Warned**,” a rare four-fight SHOWTIME CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING telecast, features former Light Heavyweight World Champion **Antonio “Magic Man” Tarver** (29-6, 20 KO’s) facing unbeaten

Lateef Kayode

(18-0, 14 KO’s) in a 12-round cruiserweight fight, former undisputed junior middleweight kingpin

Winky Wright

(51-5-1, 25 KO’s) returning to the ring to meet undefeated

Peter Quillin

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(26-0, 20 KO's) in a middleweight bout,

Austin Trout

(24-0, 14 KO's) risking his perfect record and WBA Super Welterweight belt against

Delvin Rodriguez

(26-5-3, 14 KO's) and IBF number one rated bantamweight contender

Vusi Malinga

(20-3, 12 KO's) facing IBF number five rated bantamweight contender

Leo Santa Cruz

(19-0-1, 11 KO's) for the vacant IBF bantamweight title. All four bouts are set for Saturday, June 2, airing live on SHOWTIME (9:00 p.m. ET/PT, delayed on the West Coast) from The Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif. "Four Warned" is presented by A.T. Entertainment, Golden Boy Promotions and Gary Shaw Productions with Trout vs. Rodriguez being presented in association with Greg Cohen Promotions and Joe DeGuardia's Star Boxing and Malinga vs. Santa Cruz being presented in association with Branco Sports Productions. The event is sponsored by Corona and AT&T.

Tickets for "Four Warned" are available for as low as \$25, with VIP floor seats priced at \$200. Other tickets in the 8,000-seat outdoor stadium at The Home Depot Center are available at \$50 and \$100. Fans can purchase tickets at AXS.com or by phone at 888-9-AXS-TIX ([888-929-7849](tel:888-929-7849)), as well as The Home Depot Center Box Office (open Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. PT). VIP Suites are available for purchase by calling [1-877-604-8777](tel:1-877-604-8777). For more information on group discounts or VIP packages, please call [1-877-234-8425](tel:1-877-234-8425).

Here are some highlights of what the fighters on both calls had to say.

ANTONIO TARVER

"We're doing really well. We just finished up some sparring. They said I went 13 rounds, but I thought I went 10. I don't know, but I lost track a long time ago. We feel real good and I have some good guys in there sparring with me. This has been a really, really good camp. We're peaking at the right time and the weight is down. I weighed in at around 205. I'm strong and focused. Now it's just about getting some rest and continue meditating on the vision and visualizing how this fight is going to go down and making sure we're ready for whatever he brings to the table.

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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“I’m excited to be back and fighting in America. It’s been almost two years now. I’m excited. It’s like, don’t call it a comeback. I just want to let the people know I’m still here.”

Are you surprised at Kayode's reaction to your comments while commentating on his fights?

“From an announcer’s standpoint, yeah, I’m a little surprised. I’m not paid to stroke anybody or sit behind that desk and promote or market a fighter. I’ve got to see it with my own eyes and tell it how I see it. The way I see it may not be the way your average viewer sees it, but I come from years of experience as one of the most decorated amateurs of our time and I’ve been a very successful professional fighter, so I think I know the game of boxing back and forth. I’ve had one of the best trainers and philosophers since I was 10 years old so I’ve been schooled very well. What I see may not be obvious to the naked eye. I wasn’t ever trying to be overly critical of Lateef. He’s a guy who is ranked high across the board and if he wasn’t worthy, then I wouldn’t be fighting him. That’s what he needs to understand. It’s not all about him. We all need to go back to the gym every time.

“You don’t think I didn’t work every time to get better? Yeah, you always work to get better and there are always improvements that can be made. What I was telling him were the things that I saw that he could have improved on. I’m not thinking of him being able to hit somebody hard or whatever. I’m looking at the intangibles that you need to be a world-class fighter and he could not understand that. He showed his inexperience and his youth by getting all emotional and out of whack approaching me and confronting me. Right there that tells me that his emotions got the best of him and now he’s bit off more than he can chew. So now instead of trying to tell him what I thought he should do to improve, now I’ve got to show him. This is going to be an experience of a lifetime for Lateef and he’s going to remember this fight for his lifetime. This is where he is going to be compared and judged for the rest of his career, and if he’s adamant about what he says he’s going to do, then I’m going to have to show him very early in this fight that I’m not some little boy he’s been facing. I’m not one of these kids he can just run up to and bully. You can talk all you want, but you can’t bully me because your struggle is nothing compared to my struggle here in America and what I’ve had to overcome to get to where I had to go.

“I don’t care anything about you being from Africa. I respect you because you’re a brother from another (mother), but that don’t mean anything to me because my struggles you can’t relate to. I’m the fighter I am today because of what I had to overcome, you feel me? You’ve been here five years in America. I’ve been here all my life. I had to go through everything. There’s no one

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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that gave me anything. Not one thing. I didn't even have a promoter when I started boxing professionally. I was an Olympic bronze medalist. So you have no idea what it feels like to have to beat everybody in front of you to get to where you're going. You're in my way. I'm on to bigger and better things. I'm going for the heavyweight championship and I'm not going to let Lateef Kayode stop me from my destination. So I'm looking forward to June 2 and just like you hear it in my voice, I am fired up because this man has threatened me in so many ways. Coming up to me in the streets and saying, 'What are you going to do?' OK. That's all I need to hear. Be man enough to say what you're going to do and back it up, because when I say something, I'm going to do it. I'm going to defend my title with whatever I've got. I'm ready for whatever Lateef Kayode can bring. If he thinks he's going to be the bully in this fight, then he's got another thing coming. If he thinks he's going to bring power to this fight, he's going to find out early that he's got another thing coming. He better have an A, B, C, D plan, because it's going to take more than one game plan to beat me, and just coming with power isn't going to do it, because I've felt power punchers before and I've knocked them out. I've fought bullies before and I've knocked them out. I've fought the very best in the world and I've beat them. So Lateef Kayode has a chance of a lifetime to be a legend for one night, but he's going to have to bring his butt to get it.

"I haven't taken Lateef Kayode lightly by any stretch of the imagination. That's what they need to understand. I take this guy as a serious threat. I know in this fight one punch can change the entire fight and one punch can end a fight, and what I've done in training camp is to eliminate any chance of him getting lucky and the only way I can do that is to make sure I'm in the very best shape mentally and physically. I haven't been this tense for a fight in a long time. This feels like it did before some of the biggest fights I've had because this guy is strong and has gone on record as saying he's going to knock me out. He's holding strong to that assumption. I know he's coming in strong to try and hurt me. That's just going to make me very strong and very alert and make me very sharp in that ring. I'm going to dial in on this guy and it's going to be tunnel vision. I think this fight is going to show everybody my ability and my skill.

"There isn't going to be no running. He doesn't have to worry about that. I'm 43 years old. I'm not trying to run anywhere unless I'm running in preparation for a fight. I don't have to run. I have confidence in my ability and I'm a sharp-shooter. I'm trying to hit that kidney and I'm trying to hit that chin and I'm accurate. So you don't have to worry about me missing. I'm going to be on point. I'm going to beat you down with my defense. I'm going to trust my defense. I'm going to stay in close and I'm going to work. I'm going to work for the knockout. I'm not going to look for the home run. I'm going to put some shots on this guy combination style, something he doesn't know anything about. We're going to use our angles and we're going to out-smart him and then when it's comes down to it, we're going to show that he's not the only one with muscles in the fight. If I have to hurt this guy, that's what I'm going to do.

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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“I have never been hurt. I can rely on my defense to get me through. My instincts are still intact and my reflexes are there. I trust my defense. My coach tells me all the time we haven’t gotten hurt yet, so we’re not going to get hurt until I retire. That’s my goal to walk away from the game with all my faculties and still have never been knocked down in a fight. That’s what I pride myself on: never been knocked out, never been stopped. I feel good about June 2. I’m going to turn back the hands of time and you’re going to see a 43-years-young fighter in the there, but you’re not going to know which of us is 43.”

LATEEF KAYODE

“I have something to prove to everyone and to Antonio Tarver. On June 2, I’m going to show that he’s never fought anyone like me. I’m going to prove that all the things he said about me were wrong. First of all, he said all my punches were sloppy and second of all, he said I’m not fighting with any spirit. Every time I fight on *ShoBox* he says the same thing.

“I saw him in downtown L.A. and said, ‘Why do you always says those things about me on *ShoBox*?’ He said he’s just doing his job, but when I was doing good and connecting on my punches he just quiets down and says nothing. He only concentrates on my mistakes.

“If this fight were in the streets, I know I would win. I come from far away and have struggled all my life.

“My prediction is that I think I’m going to knock him out in the fifth round or the sixth round.”

Do you view this fight as a crossroads fight to your young career?

“I don’t really have much to lose in this fight. He’s the one who has already lost and I’m undefeated. If I lose this fight there is happiness for me because I fought Antonio Tarver. If I win this fight there is happiness for me. I don’t have anything to lose. What I want to do is show people that I am better than him. He’s going to get hurt so bad, so bad. I’m coming for him.”

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

JIMMY WILLIAMS (Tarver's Trainer)

"I'm from the old school. My philosophy is that we don't care what he does. We care about what we do. Antonio is a five-time world champion. He's a boxer, fighter, puncher, counter-puncher. Skill will beat will. We work smarter, not harder. We're not running. He's punching harder now. He's ready for anything. I wish the fight was tonight. He's ready."

FREDDIE ROACH (Kayode's Trainer)

"Lateef's training really hard to get ready for this fight. We're working on a game plan now. I wish Antonio the best of luck and I hope the best man will win."

How do you control the emotions of a young fighter like Lateef?

"It's definitely a challenge. He's a young fighter and he gets excited easily. As far as the game plan for this fight, we will keep his head on straight and we'll try and keep him calm. At times he may get a little excited, but excitement makes good fights, so I'm not really worried about it.

"(Antonio) is a Hall of Famer for sure and we know we have to beat guys like this to get to the top. We're training hard and we have a good game plan so we're going to do our best to beat him. We know we're in for a tough fight, but that's what it's all about. I think we're ready at this point.

"I don't think experience will be an advantage for him. Whoever controls the fight and pulls it off will be the winner."

WINKY WRIGHT

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

“I’m happy to be back. I’m glad I have a formidable opponent. Peter comes to fight and we’re going to show the fans why we do what we do.”

What made you decide to come back to the ring now?

“I wasn’t really retired yet. I thought if I wanted to get back in the ring I had to do it and do it now. I just turned 40 so if I’m going to do this I have to do it. We’re glad to get an opponent like Peter. I’m here to prove that I want to fight the best. I’m not coming back just to fight and get a win, I want to fight the best. I want to be champion. If I can’t be champion there’s no reason to do this.”

Why was there such a long layoff?

“First of all, there was no one significant that wanted to fight me. I couldn’t get any big fights or any fights that meant something. I’m not just taking fights to entertain or taking fights just to fight. I want to fight because I want to be the best. None of the champions wanted to fight and I couldn’t get any of them to sign on the dotted line. My legacy is in stone. I would love to fight, but if they don’t want to fight forget it. So I had to wait, I did family things and enjoyed life.”

How much of the Winky that we remember from 2004 is still there?

“Oh, he’s still here. Like I said, tune in on June 2. I have a great opponent that will bring it out of me. I didn’t pick a bum to come out and fight, I picked a kid that is undefeated, that is hungry, that wants to prove to the world that he’s a great fighter. He’s going to have to do that June 2.”

What do you think of Peter’s development and how he has come along?

“I think he’s a good fighter. He’s young, hungry, tough and that’s what I’m looking for.”

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

He hasn't fought anyone like you before. How do you think it's going to be different for him on June 2?

"I've never fought him and he never fought me, so it's going to be different for both of us. We both got to get in the ring with somebody we've never seen before or fought before. Like I said, I'm going to be in great shape, he's going to be in great shape and we'll just let the wheel get working and do what we have to do to win."

Do you think he will be prepared to step up to the level that you've been fighting at?

"Like he said, I got two hands and he has two hands. When we step in the ring we have to be prepared to do whatever it takes to win. Whoever can adjust and dictate what they want to happen in the fight is going to win the fight. I want to fight the best. I want a title shot. If I don't get a title shot then what I'm doing is not necessary. If you're not here to win titles and win belts then you're just doing it for the fun of it."

Has there ever been another fighter who had to take the same route as you – fighting in people's backyards?

"Maybe Marvin Hagler. Maybe a lot of people didn't have to take the route that I had to take to get where I got to, but I think taking that route made me a better and stronger fighter. It made me a tougher fighter because I knew that I could win no matter where I was. I didn't have to be home in front of my home crowd."

Who put the fire back in your belly to do this?

"I just turned 40 and if I want to continue to fight, I need to get out there and do it now and I need to fight the best. I'm not here to take easy fights and easy wins – that's cheating the fans. The fans come to see you fight and they want to see a competitive fight. They don't want you coming in with a bum or some guy you know you can knock out. You have to give the fans who

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

they want to see. I want to fight whoever you want me to fight. Let's do it. I want the title.

"I know that I'm still in great shape, I'm still in great health and if I want to do this, I believe that I still have the ability to do this. I put in the hard work and put in the training. Training is the hardest part of boxing. The fight night is the easy part, that's just one night to get in there and do what you do. It's the training that hurts a lot of fighters. You have to learn how to train smarter and learn how to execute your game plan in the fight."

Did it take some time being used to being back in the gym and preparing for a fight?

"It took some getting used to. Anything that is worth having is worth working hard for. I work hard for this."

Did you stay in reasonably good condition while you were off? When you went back to the gym how much did you weigh?

"I'm not going to say I stayed in boxing shape. I wasn't fat, but I wasn't in boxing shape. I may have weighed 185, but I was in shape. It wasn't with a big belly and all that kind of stuff. It was a different kind of shape.

Do you think we need to change our perception of 40-year-olds boxing?

"Definitely, the game has evolved. Training is totally different. Fighting is totally different. You have to look at the individual, not how old the individual is and see how they fight. All you can do is watch them fight and see what happens."

PETER QUILLIN

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

“I think my advantage is I’m just going to be as sharp as I can on June 2. I’m prepared for anything. I’m prepared to fight King Kong if I have to. That’s what I’ve been training to do. Training is the biggest part of a boxer’s fight. I make sure that I have to endure every struggle while I’m in camp so I can see the glory when I step in the ring on June 2.

“I haven’t been the distance in over two years now. My last five fights have been stoppages six rounds or less. Boxing is all about the challenges. And that’s why Winky Wright and I took this fight.

“I never really said I was going to knock him out. When I say Pluto it’s a metaphor for a place that we’ve never been to. He’s never fought a fighter like me and I’ve never fought a fighter like him. The fans can expect a fight that they’ve never seen before. That’s why this fight has been made on SHOWTIME. Who’s better? This is the challenge. Knockouts come naturally. I’m never going to force the knockout. When I say Pluto, Pluto is a place that he’s never been. Now if he happens to see stars then that’s not my problem.”

What do you think you’ll see from Winky next week?

“I think we’ll see the best of Winky Wright. I’m just super prepared for this fight. I’m ready and I’m not going to expect anything less than him throwing his two hands and I have to be ready for that. The No. 1 thing a fighter has to do is be able to adjust and that’s what I’m going to be able to do on June 2.”

Do you expect him to be best opponent you’ve ever fought?

“Every fight to me is the biggest fight of my career. Right now, I’m thinking this is the biggest fight of my career. As far as his long layoff, I can’t necessarily say if that’s going to hurt him or help him. I just know that I’m prepared for a 21-year-old Winky Wright and that’s what I’ve been preparing for. I’ve been preparing for the best Winky Wright, not where he’s at right now or his age.”

When do you think you’ll be ready for a title shot?

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

“I hope this fight right here sets me up for a title shot.”

How much did moving out to the West Coast help you?

“I think moving to the West Coast has been a blessing. It’s been a blessing in disguise to be around other champions, be around other guys that want to be champions, be around Freddie Roach with the eye that he has for boxing. I’m very blessed and I don’t take any of this for granted.

AUSTIN TROUT

“It’s going to be a great night of fights and I feel like me and Delvin are going to be the show stealers.”

What are the keys to this fight?

“We do all the preparation in the gym. We know Delvin is a very high-action, fast-paced fighter, so we’re going to have to take that pace and step it up a notch. We need to keep our combinations moving and our footwork. We need to use our feet. We don’t want to stay right in front of him, but we don’t want to run either.”

Where does Delvin rank as the level of opponent that you’ve faced before?

“I think this is the hardest fight to date that I’ve had in my career. Delvin is a world class fighter. I’ve watched him on TV as a fan and I know the type of challenge that’s coming forward. There’s no way I can look past a fighter like Delvin. This is the toughest fight of my life.”

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

Have you ever faced anyone like Delvin style-wise?

“The thing with Delvin is he doesn’t fight the same every fight. He changes his style and he adapts. He’s a smart fighter. I don’t think I’ve ever fought anybody that has the diversity that Delvin does. We get ready with a bunch of different styles of sparring partners. In case he wants to box, we work on cutting the ring off. If he wants to bang, we have an idea that we want to do for that. We make our own camp diverse.”

Do you think this is the fight where you can break into the mainstream?

“I definitely hope so. Going around the world and fighting off of TV has taught me a lot of different things, but I need that exposure and I feel like Delvin is the type of fighter to bring out the best in me. I want the world to see the best in me and I’m glad Delvin was able to accept the fight where we can bring out the best in each other and showcase good boxing for the world.”

Who would you like to face in the 154-pound division?

“I want to get the rest of those belts. I feel like there are a lot of belts in my class and to be the true champion, you have to have them all. One of my goals is to be the undisputed champion. I’m looking at Canelo (Alvarez), I’m looking at K9 (Cornelius Bundrage) and, of course, everybody is looking at Floyd (Mayweather), but first I got to get past Delvin to make any of this possible. I look at Delvin as the gatekeeper. He’s the one who’s going to let me in or deny me. I have to get through him to get those other belts.”

DELVIN RODRIGUEZ

“It’s going to be a great fight. I have respect for him. He’s an undefeated champion. I’m so hungry for a world title. He’s coming and he knows he’s facing a tough opponent and I’m sure he’s prepared and so am I. I’ve been waiting years and years for this opportunity. I’ve been through ups and downs in my career and thanks to God I’m here.”

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

What are the keys to this fight?

“I just got to do what I do. I have to go in there and put my combinations together. I haven’t had any problems against lefties.”

What will Trout bring to the table to challenge you?

“I have respect for Austin. He’s a fine champion. I’ve faced a lot of tough opponents, but I think with Austin it’s going to be different because he has a lot of skills. He’s not just going to go there and fight just for the heck of it. I know that I have to be very focused. I’m facing someone that I know I can’t make any mistakes [against] and I definitely cannot look past him.”

Have you ever faced anyone like Austin style-wise?

“I know that Austin Trout has a lot of experience. He has good movement. He’s always aware of where he is in the ring and that makes a big difference, but I feel very confident about facing a southpaw. For me, I’ve been comfortable every time I faced a southpaw opponent.”

What was your reaction when you were offered the opportunity to fight for the world title again?

“I was very excited. I had to go back to the gym the same day. I think that people who follow my career know what I’ve been through – a lot of ups and downs. I’ve been waiting for this opportunity. When we finally got the news that we were fighting Austin Trout it was one of the most exciting things that’s happened to me in a long time.”

Who would you like to face in the 154-pound division?

“This fight is important to me and I’m excited about it. I don’t want to go backwards and I don’t

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

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Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

want to go sideways – I want to go forward. I want to fight the guys that are on top of me and that are better than me. I just want to go forward.”

VUSI MALINGA

“I’m very happy to fight on SHOWTIME. It’s an important fight for me and I’ve been waiting for this opportunity for a long time. I’m training very well and I think I’m going to take the title.

“I’m coming to the United States (from Johannesburg, South Africa) on Sunday.

“I didn’t know much about Leo Santa Cruz before I found out I would have this fight. I know I’m going to win this fight and I’m very fit. I’ve been waiting for this opportunity for a long time. I think it’s my time to win this title.

“I think the advantage of fighting bigger fights is there. I think because I’ve been training so hard that I deserve to win this fight.

“I would never underestimate my opponent.”

LEO SANTA CRUZ

“I’m very excited and happy for this opportunity that SHOWTIME is giving me to fight on such a big card. It’s such a big privilege and an honor. I’ve been training really hard and I want to do my best to impress SHOWTIME, but mostly I just want to win this title. Ever since I was a little kid my dream was to have the opportunity to win a world championship. I just started training really hard when I found out I would have this chance and have even hired a strength and conditioning coach. I’m very concentrated on this fight and think I’ll come out victorious on June 2.

Tarver Wants To Beat Kayode, Win Heavyweight Crown

Written by The Sweet Science
Friday, 25 May 2012 11:38

“I don’t know much about (Malinga), but I have watched a couple of videos of him. I know he likes to come forward and he’s tough. He’s a good fighter and he looks strong and he has a good uppercut. I’ve been learning how to block uppercuts. I’ve been just training here and learning how to fight him.

“I’m going to try and go to the body first and a lot, but if it doesn’t work down there then I’ll try and go up because I think he has a weakness that he drops his hands, so I’m going to try and take advantage of that. I’m not going to try and look for the knockout. I’m just going to try and win.

“I think he’s the toughest fighter I’ve faced. I don’t think his layoff will affect him. He’s always been in the gym and sparring.”

Who were some of your favorite fighters coming up?

“There was Julio Cesar Chavez, Oscar De La Hoya, a lot of the Mexican fighters and Manny Pacquiao now.”