Written by Michael Woods
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It's nice to be wanted, isn't it? Bernard Hopkins is blessed with options today, more than he was after he looked so-so in his second tussle with Chad Dawson.

Andre Ward said he'd be open to fighting The Executioner, Nathan Cleverly said he'd like to show the old man that his ring generalship isn't all that, Jean Pascal wouldn't mind another crack. Others would like a chance to show the pugilistic sage of our age that his time on the stage isn't infinite.

But being the cagey negotiator he is, the 48-year-old put out a statement which offered a peek at one potential path, but then re-directed the reader to another path, without much in the way of illumination. It's the way he likes to operate, and who can take issue with that...or even the pretty much inarguable fact that some of his Machiavellian means have earned him a load of enemies on the way. Because many of those same haters will grudgingly offer their admiration for his durability of body and mind.

Yes, Hopkins has earned forgiveness along the way, and the right to call all his own shots. If he wants a gimme in Murat, or another takedown of a youthful non believer, Cleverly, or a longshot test against Ward, he's earned the right to follow the path that suits him best.

There are numerous champions that have been calling me out after my historic victory on Saturday Night.

I am aware that I have a mandatory obligation under the IBF guidelines to fight Karo Murat, the mandatory challenger. Out of respect to the IBF, it is my intention to honor my commitment to the mandatory challenger at this stage of the game just as I have done throughout my twenty-five year career, namely, through twenty straight defenses of the middleweight title.

However, the fans, including, my supporters, have made it very clear that at this point of my career, they want the Executioner in big fights. In fact, 12,300 fans in Brooklyn have sent that message very loud and clear across the boxing world.

I look forward to getting back in the ring and continuing my legacy.

--Bernard Hopkins

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