

Andre "S.O.G." Ward Locked In For Edwin "La Bomba" Rodriguez

Written by David A. Avila
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When Andre "S.O.G." Ward appeared at an afternoon press conference in Southern California recently, an angry look was evident from the prizefighter from Oakland.

Maybe he doesn't like visiting the southern part of the state.

Ward (26-0, 14 Kos) will have to acclimatize to the warmer region when he fights Edwin "La Bomba" Rodriguez (24-0, 16 Kos) on Nov. 16, at Citizens Business Bank Arena in Ontario, Ca. The super middleweight world champion is running out of opponents at 168 pounds.

After more than a year spent outside of a prize ring, Ward returns with a number of newer faces awaiting him. Injuries and a contract dispute kept the winner of the Super Middleweight Tournament from plying his trade to the boxing public. But few can forget the sight of Ward barreling through Chad Dawson by knockout on Sept. 8, 2012.

"It's been a long time coming," said Ward of the return to the boxing wars. "I'm not 20 pounds over my weight."

The tall figure of Rodriguez awaits Ward. It's rare to see someone actually taller than the champion, but the Dominican has a slight height advantage. The boxer from Worcester, Mass. willingly fought back-to-back fights in Monaco to prove himself and to HBO that he was a fighter worthy of facing the world champion.

"My last two fights have been overseas," said Rodriguez, 28, who's a former U.S. National champion as an amateur. "Andre Ward is a great fighter. He did things no one thought he was going to do."

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Now Rodriguez feels he can do what few think he can do.

Lou DiBella, who promotes Rodriguez, has his fighter undergoing testing with Victor Conte to prove he's a clean athlete. He extended an invitation to Ward but no answer was forthcoming. It only seemed to anger Ward even more.

Ward had lost a request earlier in the year to depart from his promoter, Goossen-Tutor Promotions. California State Athletic Commission ruled that the contract was still intact. Now Ward will face Rodriguez at the Citizens Business Bank Arena in Ontario.

The time off doesn't seem to worry Ward's ace trainer Virgil Hunter who also trains Alfred "Perro" Angulo among others.

"He doesn't miss a beat," said Hunter about Ward's dedication toward remaining fit and prepared. "He's a performer. He's never let up in the sport."

Ward was serious and seldom smiled during the informal press conference.

"We're going to see an historic night on Nov. 16," said Ward matter-of-factly. "We've been working. I've done my homework on Edwin (Rodriguez) for the last four years."

Ward told the press he keeps a dossier on all potential violators of his kingdom, much like a modern-day J. Edgar Hoover.

"If I see a guy I remotely will fight in the future, I know all about him," said Ward. "I'm locked in."

Tickets are already available: <http://www.axs.com/events/245287/ward-vs-rodriguez-tickets>

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