

Bernard Hopkins Is One Karo Murat Away From Andre Ward

Written by David A. Avila

Thursday, 24 October 2013 21:31



Defying all manner of physical and mental logic, the ageless wonder known as Bernard “The Executioner” Hopkins continues to befuddle the boxing world by beating younger challengers half of his years.

Can he do it yet again?

Hopkins (53-6-2, 32 Kos), 48, defends the IBF light heavyweight title against Iraq’s Karo Murat (25-1-1, 15 Kos), 30, at the Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City on Saturday. Showtime will televise the Golden Boy Promotions main event.

“This never gets old for me. That’s been a love that’s still there and the energy is still there because this never gets old for me,” said Hopkins. “You can’t do it all your life, but it never gets old. “

Just when you think the Philadelphia warrior has exhausted all physical tools necessary to fight in the elite level, he goes and defeats a young killer like Tavoris Cloud. You know that Adonis Stevenson took a thing or two from Hopkins’ win over the former IBF light heavyweight champion.

Hopkins is a realist in the truest sense. Time is racing behind him like a revved up red Corvette bearing down on him. But with maybe one lap left, Hopkins hopes to rope in the likes of Oakland’s much respected Andre Ward, who has a fight date looming next month with Edwin Rodriguez.

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Ward vs. Hopkins is a match made for pay-per-view heaven. Both would love to face each other.

“Before you get to the Tootsie Roll you've got to do a lot of licking,” said Hopkins about openly discussing his next challenge should he beat Murat. “That's not in a disrespectful way, but it's in a way of knowing that you got to get through the prize before you get down into that box of the Cracker Jacks and you get the prize.”

Murat, who now fights out of Germany, has never fought outside of Europe but does not feel it will be too difficult a challenge to defeat the boxing wizardry of Hopkins. He stands firmly in the way of a certain mega fight.

“I saw in the fight versus Cloud that Bernard has pretty much the experience that none other boxer has, but you see that he's just trying to get one punch or a one-two combination of it and then clinch. Clinching is the state of his game,” said Murat. “In the years before when he was a middleweight, when he was the middleweight champion he didn't show all that much clinching...you see that he's growing old.”

It's obvious that Hopkins is growing old. But will he grow old fast enough for Murat to defeat him?

“I'm going to Atlantic City like it's a super fight and knowing that I have to be on my A game no matter who I'm fighting at this stage of my career, especially when the opponent is not really known in the states, like myself,” Hopkins said. “I'm going to do it until I realize that I don't have to do it anymore and that isn't two years, three years, four years. That's only a fight or two.”

Can Hopkins get to Ward?

Fights on television

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Sat. Showtime, 9 p.m., Bernard Hopkins (53-6-2) vs. Karo Murat (25-1-1), Peter Quillin (29-0) vs. Gabe Rosado (21-6).

Mon. Fox Sports 1, 8 p.m., Manuel Avila (12-0) vs. Jose Silveira (15-9).

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