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Earned: Andre Ward Exclusive, Part 1

By [Caryn A. Tate](#) on March 14, 2018



"He was feared. He was that contender that was hungry for his shot." (Photo: Courtesy)

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"I have no plans on coming back. But I don't know what the future holds. I'm just living my life, I'm enjoying my life, and we've gotta see what happens..."

“I’ve been doing this for too long to all of a sudden turn that switch off,” said Andre Ward, regarding the rumors about him making a potential return to the sport. “I have no plans on coming back. But I don’t know what the future holds. I’m just living my life, I’m enjoying my life, and we’ve gotta see what happens.”

The fighter known as “S.O.G.” retired on top of the sport in September 2017 with a record of 32-0, 16 KOs. Recently, after Andre posted a photo of himself looking larger with a caption stating he weighs 199 pounds and that “we’re working on something special,” speculation abounded that perhaps Ward was planning a comeback at heavyweight.

He has since revealed, though, that what he’s actually working on is a documentary film about his journey. While a ring return isn’t planned, Andre is too smart to make absolute statements about the future.

“It’s been really, really neat to not have the pressure of a date, to not have the pressure of my next opponent or a training camp kinda staring me down, and just kind of sit back and take it all in,” said Andre. “It’s kind of been overwhelming in many senses.”

Finally finding himself with some time for reflection, Ward discussed the “old-school” training he received from the time he started, which he credits with helping him reach the heights that he did.

“When I came up, the way I was taught was I had to get my feet in sync first. I had to learn how to move forward and backward, and then laterally, left and right. And then take that to the next level. And then I’d bring my hands into the picture, and learn how to sync those two together.

“People aren’t taught like that [today]. The fact that I had that old-school, foundational teaching, that’s what’s allowed me to have a twenty-year career and a thirteen-year pro career the way that I have.”

Andre’s father, Frank Ward, was a former boxer. When he first took nine-year-old Andre to a boxing gym, Frank (whose boxing hero was Muhammad Ali) was deliberate about finding a coach who would ensure his son didn’t take any unnecessary punches—and who, of course, could teach Andre to be an efficient and skillful fighter. He found Virgil Hunter, who helped develop Andre into one of the best boxers in the sport.

“One thing that my father and Virgil always said was they’re not enamored with what I do well,” Andre explained. “As coaches, they start where I can be beat. They have an objective assessment of where they think a guy can beat me and give me trouble, and they start working from that point. The other stuff, the good stuff, is gonna be there—we’re gonna work on that stuff. But if you struggle fighting inside, we have to work on that until it starts to show up. And it showed up for the first time for me when I fought Allan Green, and it just got better from there.”

When Ward faced Green in 2010 during the monumental Super Six World Boxing Classic tournament, it was a telling moment for the young champion. He had performed incredibly well against the number one seed Mikkel Kessler just prior, but many still doubted Andre’s ability to take a punch and wondered whether he could deal with a force like Green.

In the end, Ward dismantled Green in a textbook performance of skillful inside fighting.

“That [Green fight] was a big moment for me,” Andre said. “I think people forget the reputation Allan Green had at that time. He was feared. Nobody wanted to fight him. He was that contender that was hungry for his shot, and nobody really wanted to risk getting in there with him. You know, the fight he had with Jaidon Codrington was still fresh in people’s minds even though it was several years old. He just had this reputation, and in some cases it was a legitimate rep. He could box, he was mean, and he had a nasty left hook. And people just didn’t want to take that chance.

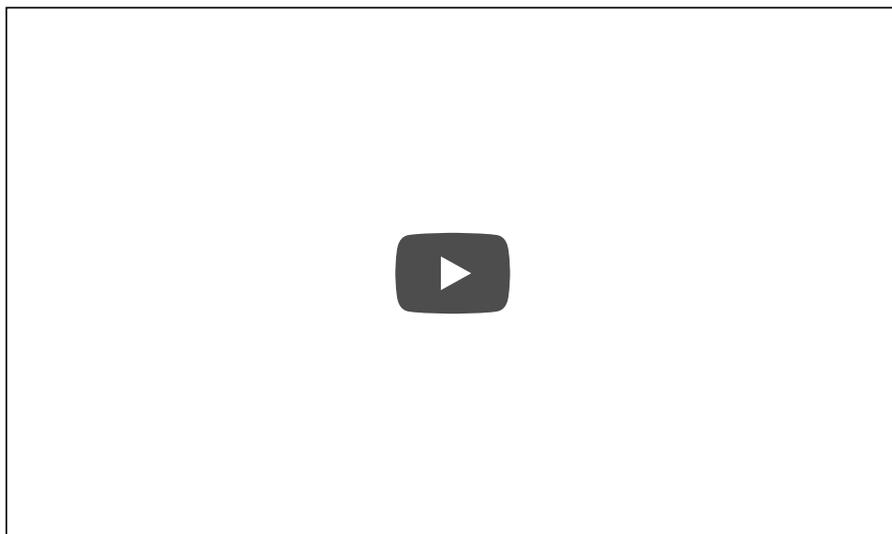
“When I was able to do what I did to him, that took my game and my confidence to the next level.”

More to come in part 2...

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