

"This is where I belong!": Ball Jr. aims for landmark victory April 17th

Super middleweight prospect faces veteran Bryan Vera for the WBC USNBC crown

Worcester, MA (February 1, 2021) – It's not often a fighter gets an opportunity to face someone he grew up watching or, in some cases, even idolizing. Consider Kendrick Ball Jr. one of the fortunate few.

And while it may be a bit of an exaggeration to bill this as a "passing of the torch," the Worcester, MA, super middleweight prospect knows his April 17, 2021 showdown against former world title-holder Bryan Vera is the type of the fight that can get him noticed and move him one step closer to where he wants to be.

In what will be his toughest, most important, test to date, the 28-year-old Ball (@kendrick.92) faces Vera, a veteran of 44 professional fights, in the eight-round main event of Granite Chin Promotions' upcoming fight card at the SportsZone in Derry, NH. The bout, co-promoted by Ball's promoter, CES Boxing, will be held for the vacant WBC USNBC Silver Super Middleweight Title. Ticket information will be available soon at Granite Chin's website.

With 18 fights under his belt, Ball is still very much a prospect in the competitive super middleweight division, a weight class currently ruled by the likes of Caleb Plant – fresh of his dominant win this past weekend over Caleb Truax – and wily veteran Danny Jacobs, but also ripe with opportunity for young-up-comers, among them power-puncher Edgar Berlanga, who has stopped each of his first 16 opponents in the opening round.

Where does Ball fit into the puzzle? He recently cracked BoxRec's top 50 among 168-pounders in the United States, nestled alongside fellow prospects Money Powell IV and fellow New Englander Elvis Figueroa, and has done his best to stay busy amidst the coronavirus pandemic. Ball last fought in August in a keep-busy fight against Tahlik Taylor, earning the win via first-round knockout to run his record to 15-1-2.

Defeating Vera in April would push his increasing popularity to new heights. Those who've followed the sport long enough know Vera's resume; the Texas native, now 39, turned pro in 2004 and won his 14 fights before becoming a household name on The Contender reality television series. Vera jumped between 160 and 168, but earned some of his most impressive wins at middleweight, including a knockout against then unbeaten prospect Andy Lee in 2008 and a pair of wins over fellow Contender vet Sergio Mora. His second win over Mora in 2012 earned him sole possession of the NABO middleweight title and launched arguably the most successful stretch of his pro career in which he defended the belt twice against prime contenders Serhiy Dinziruk and Donatas Bondorovas.

The latter half of Vera's career includes two bouts against former world champion Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and hard-fought battles against Willie Monroe Jr. and Rocky Fielding, again with Vera jumping between 160 and 168.

Ball remembers watching Vera at the height of his reign and considers himself a fan. He also shared the stage with Vera in August in New Hampshire; after Ball made quick work of Taylor, Vera wiped out veteran Mike Anderson in 61 seconds for the first of back-to-back wins in 2020.

"When I saw him fight that night, I told my father, 'I want that fight,'" Ball said. "When this opportunity came up, I knew I had to take it.

"I'm excited," he continued. "I need to show people that this is where I'm supposed to be. I deserve this opportunity. Now it's time to show everyone what I can do against a top opponent."

This is no doubt a step up in class for Ball, who has won six in a row since his lone pro loss in 2018 and has kept busy between fights with top-quality sparring, notably with current WBO world middleweight champion and Providence, RI, native Demetrius Andrade. The time off from the pandemic gave Ball enough time to both take a much-needed break from training and sparring and jump right back into the gym when the time came to knock off the rust and get back to work. He focused a lot on his defense, especially in his August matchup with Taylor, who missed weight and tipped the scales at a whopping 181 pounds.

"Having never fought at that weight, I didn't know what to expect," Ball said. "I just had to be on my 'A' game. I tried to box and move and let the knockout come to me.

"That's a lot of what we've been working on. I've really been focusing on my boxing more than usual – not trying to get hit a lot, and trying to be more cautious.

"With this fight, I'll have more time to prepare than I've ever had in my career. This is the first time I've been able to really focus on one guy and get ready for him, and that's a benefit for me. I think I'll be a lot stronger than anyone has seen."

Training alongside his father and head coach, Ken Ball Sr., at Camp Get Right Boxing in Worcester, the younger Ball expects to be at his best physically and mentally come April 17. In addition, he's fully committed to staying at 168, a wise move for the 6-foot-2 right-hander who debuted as a true middleweight and has fought between 160 and 164 pounds several times early in his career. Super middleweight simply feels more comfortable.

The end game for Ball is to reach the top of his profession – that point where boxing is full-time job and no longer the "side hustle" it starts out as for many young fighters on the rise. Ball has never considered himself a "9-5er" and doesn't plan on starting now. A win April 17 against one of the sport's most recognized names would be a step in the right direction.

"I don't want to work a regular job. I want to put myself in a position where I don't have to work, and boxing is my outlet to do that," Ball said. "My goal is to win a world title, and I've kept that mindset throughout the pandemic. I've been waiting for an opportunity like this, and it's finally here. Now I have to seize it."

Visit CESFights.com for more information, or follow CES Boxing on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @CESBOXING.

INFORMATION

CES Boxing is one of the top promotions in the northeast and one of the few to successfully promote both mixed martial arts and professional boxing. Launched in 1992 by longtime boxing judge Jimmy Burchfield Sr., the promotion is the only in professional boxing to boast two reigning WBC Youth world champions in lightweight Jamaine Ortiz and featherweight Irvin Gonzalez. CES Boxing recently teamed with UFC Fight Pass, the world's No. 1 streaming platform for combat sports, to showcase its events to a worldwide audience.

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