

Heavyweight Nagy Aguilera, 16-4 (11 KOs), faces former world light heavyweight champion Antonio Tarver, 27-6 (19 KOs), of Orlando, FL, at the Buffalo Run Casino in Miami, Okla., Friday. The fight, scheduled for 10 rounds, will be televised on ShowTime.

Aguilera, 24, burst onto the heavyweight scene last year by knocking out former WBC titleholder Oleg Maskaev in one round, but his success

was short-lived after losing two of his next three fights. A transplant to Houston from New York, he is managed by Lou Savarese and trained by Bobby Benton at the Main Boxing Gym.

"Nagy Aguilera is a young and talented fighter who has beaten world champions but when you look at my experience, I'm sure he's never faced a fighter with my experience, with my talent, with my skill level and with my ability," Tarver said.

A southpaw, Tarver, 41, previously held the world light heavyweight championship on two separate occasions and is best remembered for being the first man to knock out the legendary Roy Jones, Jr. in 2004 and the only man to have defeated Jones twice. He has been inactive, though, since losing to Chad Dawson in May 2009 in an attempt to regain a portion of the championship.

"He's a very good fighter and a world champion but he hasn't fought for a year or two and he's getting up in age," Aguilera said. "I know I can take him."

"I don't have trouble with southpaws but you've got to make the adjustments," Aguilera added. "Sometimes you prepare for something but it turns out to be something else."

While Aguilera, who weighed in at 231 for his last bout, has fought his entire career as a heavyweight, Tarver has never fought above the 175-pound light heavyweight limit. Tarver's only previous foray into the heavyweight division was as an actor when he bulked up to play Mason Dixon, heavyweight champion and Sylvester Stallone's nemesis in the 2006 movie

Rocky Balboa.

Should life imitate art as Tarver hopes, Aguilera would be the first stepping stone to eventually claiming the heavyweight championship of the world.

"I've been to the mountaintop but who's to say I can't get there again and climb all the way to the top of the heavyweight mountain," Tarver said. "This is big and this is what I get up for. These next two years will be a crowning moment in my career; to show the people that I can reinvent myself once again and be heavyweight champion once again."

Standing an inch shorter than Aguilera at 6'2", Tarver said his move up in weight has been long overdue since he outgrew the light heavyweight division long ago. He typically walks around at 225 and had drained himself for years melting down to fight at 175, he added.

"That's the key. I'm not killing myself," Tarver said. "I can fight harder and I can fight longer."

Aguilera, who has studied footage of Tarver's previous fights, said his size advantage will be more of a factor than Tarver expects. Tarver, he added, might have an edge in big-fight experience but not in speed or mobility despite being the leaner man.

"He's ahead of himself if he thinks moving up to heavyweight is nothing," Aguilera said. "I'm faster than him even though he's smaller. Plus I can move around the ring real good. I just have to stay smart and focused in there and we'll beat him."

As for their chins, Tarver has never been stopped despite tangling with the cream of the light heavyweight crop in his heyday. Whether his chin can withstand a heavyweight's punch remains to be seen. Aguilera suffered his first knockout loss at the hands of Sam Peter earlier this year.

Despite four losses on his record this early in his career, Aguilera said he is young enough to

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learn from his mistakes, regroup and conquer the most lucrative division in boxing. He attributes his losses to a lack of discipline that resulted in subpar conditioning.

"I just have to train hard and dedicate myself more," Aguilera said. "In the past I was lazy and just did what I wanted to do. Now I'm doing what I have to do."

"The best fighters out there are the ones who have lost and come back to win great fights," he added. "Ordinary fighters lose and stay retired."

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