

**RAY BELTRAN FIGHTS FOR A WORLD TITLE
AND A NEW LIFE!**

**Friday, February 16
Grand Sierra Resort in Reno, Nevada
Live on ESPN, ESPN Deportes and the ESPN App**

**Undercard Features
Egidijus Kavaliauskas Defending NABF Welterweight Belt
Against Former World Champion David Avanesyan
Plus
Olympic Silver Medalist Shakur Stevenson**

***Tickets Go On Sale
Tomorrow! Wednesday, January 24, at 1 P.M. ET***

Reno, NV (January 23, 2018) -- World championship boxing returns the "Biggest Little City in the World," Reno Nevada! No. 1 world-rated lightweight contender [RAY "Sugar" BELTRAN](#), fighting for his first world championship belt and his green card to stay in the U.S. with his family, will headline an all-action card on **Friday, February 16**, in the **Grand Sierra Resort's Grand Theatre**. Beltran (34-7-1, 21 KOs), from Los Mochis, Sinaloa, Mexico, will be battling former world champion and current No. 2 world-rated contender **PAULUS MOSES** (39-3, 24 KOs), from Windhoek, Namibia, for the vacant [World Boxing Organization \(WBO\)](#) lightweight world title. The co-main event will feature undefeated NABF welterweight champion **EGIDIJUS "The Mean Machine" KAVALIAUSKAS** (18-0, 15 KOs), from Oxnard, Calif., by way of Kaunas, Lithuania, defending his title against former world champion **DAVID "Ava" AVANESYAN** (23-2-1, 11 KOs), of Pyatigorsk, Russia, in a 10-round battle of Top-10 world-rated contenders. Both title fights will be televised live and exclusively at **9 p.m. EST** on [ESPN](#) and [ESPN Deportes](#) and stream *live* on the **ESPN App** at **7 p.m. EST**. The championship event will also feature the return of 2016 Olympic silver medalist [SHAKUR STEVENSON](#) (4-0, 2 KOs), of Newark, NJ. Stevenson has a unique

relationship with Reno, where he began each year from 2013 through 2015 by winning a national amateur title. Additionally, he won the gold medal and Outstanding Boxer award at the 2016 Olympic Trials. Stevenson has never lost in Reno

Two-time world heavyweight championship challenger and current Top-10 world-rated contender **BRYANT JENNINGS** (21-2, 12 KOs), of Philadelphia, PA, will also be featured on the undercard, in an eight-round bout. Jennings, who is a vegan, appears in "The Game Changers," a documentary directed by Louie Psihoyos, the Oscar®-winning director of "The Cove." "The Game Changers" tells the story of James Wilks -- elite special forces trainer and winner of The Ultimate Fighter -- as he travels the world on a quest for the truth behind the world's most dangerous myth: that meat is necessary for protein, strength and optimal health. It premiered last week at the Sundance Film Festival.

Promoted by [Top Rank®](#), in association with Let's Get It On Promotions, tickets to the Beltran-Moses world championship event will go on sale **Tomorrow!** **Wednesday, January 24, at 1 p.m. EST / 10 a.m. PST.** Priced at \$79, \$54, and \$29, including facility fees, tickets may be purchased online at www.grandsierra.com, at the Grand Theater Box Office, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. PT, daily, or charge by phone at 1-775-789-1115.

"There isn't a more inspiring story in boxing than Ray Beltran's," said Hall of Fame promoter [Bob Arum](#). "It hasn't been an easy road for Ray, but he has more than met the challenge time and time again. I can't think of a better way to start Ray's 2018 season than with this tremendous world championship fight. I am also looking forward to seeing the welterweight battle between Egidijus Kavaliauskas and David Avanesyan which should be nothing but fireworks. And no one lights up a night better than Shakur Stevenson, with his fast hands and bright smile. "

"I'm excited about this fight for many reasons. I'm fighting for myself, for my eighteen years I have worked to become a world champion, I am fighting for my family,

my wife, and for my children to be proud of me," said Beltran. "When you're a champion, you are a champion forever. I am fighting for my team, the people who have been with me from the start. It's easy when you are on your way up to have fans, but my true fans have been with me at my lowest, and stayed through my highs in life. This fight means everything to me, a victory will also seal my green card. For me to be world champion, and a citizen of this country, this is my dream. I respect my opponents always, but this is my destiny, and no man will get in the way of that. I'm ready to prove to everyone that I am the most dangerous lightweight in the world. I'm coming February 16th to take what was mine in Scotland, and when I leave Reno I am leaving as the WBO world champion."

"I would like to thank God for this amazing opportunity. I have had a blessed boxing career and all thanks to everybody who supported me over the years. Thanks to my Promoter and mentor Nestor Tobias and to an amazing forward looking visionary sponsor in MTC who continues to push us to become only the best," said Moses. "It's been an incredibly positive week. I am honoured to have recently been inducted as a MTC Sports Legend, the highest sports honour in Namibia and now an amazing opportunity to fight Beltran who I highly regard, and of course an opportunity for me to become world champion again. I look forward to this fight and doing my country proud once again."

"I don't remember much about Avanesyan when we were in the amateurs. But he will, for sure, be my toughest opponent in the ring," said Kavaliauskas. "I am very excited to show the best of me in this fight. Thank you, Top Rank and ESPN for giving me this opportunity -- one step closer to getting a world title belt."

"I am so glad and proud for the Mean Machine to climb to a new level. Thank you, Top Rank for giving the Machine an opportunity to make his debut on ESPN," said Egis Klimas, who manages Kavaliauskas.

"This is a great opportunity for me to return to the top of the welterweight division," said Avanesyan. "My trainer and I are working very hard on my conditioning, strength and strategy because we know what is at stake and we know Egidijus brings to the fight. And make no mistake, this is a fight."

"I'm ready to kick off 2018 in my first eight-round fight. I've been wanting to go eight rounds for awhile now and I'm excited to finally get the opportunity in my first fight of the year." said Stevenson. "I'm undefeated in Reno and won four national titles there in the amateurs, including the 2016 Olympic Trials, so I plan to keep that streak going on February 16."

"Grand Sierra Resort is thrilled to host this exciting championship fight card and generate national TV exposure for the Reno-Tahoe region," Christopher Abraham, VP of Marketing at Grand Sierra Resort said. "We are thrilled to work with such outstanding partners as Top Rank, ESPN and Let's Get It On Promotions."

Beltran, a native of Mexico who resides in Phoenix, AZ., enters this fight having won four of his last fights by knockout. A three-time lightweight world title challenger and a former sparring partner of eight-division world champion Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao, Beltran still trains at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, Calif. Beltran is fighting for more than just a world title. He is fighting to obtain his green card so that he can remain in the U.S. with his family under the Extraordinary Ability as a Professional Boxing (EB-1) Employment-Based First Preference category.. A world title victory will all but assure him of his permanent status. Recent career highlights include one-punch knockout victories over Mason Menard (32-1, 24 KOs) and Jonathan Maicelo (32-1, 24 KOs) on December 10, 2016 and May 20, 2017, respectively. In his most recent fight, Beltran solidified his upcoming world title shot by winning a gritty majority decision over former two-time interim [World Boxing Association](#) (WBA) super featherweight world champion Bryan Vasquez (36-2, 19 KOs), on August 5. Vasquez was world-rated No. 1 by the WBA when they fought. Beltran is currently world-rated No. 1 by the WBO and the [World Boxing Council \(WBC\)](#).

Moses captured the WBA world lightweight title in 2009, traveling to Yokohama, Japan to defeat defending champion and hometown favorite Yusuke Kobori via a unanimous decision. After one successful title defense -- another unanimous decision victory, this time over Takehiro Shimada, Moses' 15-month reign as world champion ended in 2010 at the hands of Miguel Acosta. Since losing a unanimous decision to Ricky Burns in their 2012 WBO lightweight world championship fight, Moses has strung together an impressive record of 11-1, 1 NC, including TKO victories over Cosmas Cheka and Crispin Moliati in his last two fights and a two-year reign as WBO International lightweight champion and his current 14-month reign as WBO Africa lightweight champion. Moses, a veteran who has fought professionally in Asia, Europe and Africa, will be making his North America debut.

Kavaliauskas, a two-time Lithuanian Olympian and a 2012 World Amateur bronze medalist, has been lighting up the welterweight division. A stablemate of pound for pound superstar **Vasiliy "Hi-Tech" Lomchenko**, Kavaliauskas has become a fan favorite for his aggressive style and explosive knockout power. He won all three of his fights in 2017 by knockout, winning the NABF welterweight title in his last fight which took place on September 22. He enters this fight world-rated No. 4 by the WBO.

Avanesyan is no stranger to high pressure fights. The Russian native who trains in the U.K., captured the WBA interim welterweight world title in 2015, via a ninth round TKO of Charlie Navarro. He successfully defended the interim world title once, scoring a unanimous decision over former three-division world champion and future Hall of Famer Shane Mosley. Elevated to world champion by the WBA after the Mosley victory, Avanesyan lost the title on February 18, 2017 to former unified junior welterweight world champion Lamont Peterson. It was a close fight with the momentum shifting back and forth. At the end, Avanesyan lost a close 12-round unanimous decision. Avanesyan returned to the winner's circle in his last fight, winning a unanimous decision over Serge Ambomo. He enters this fight world-rated No. 8 by the WBA.

Stevenson begins his sophomore year as a professional graduating to eight round bouts. He ran the table in 2017, winning two of his four fights by knockout, proving his amateur pedigree more than prepared him for the professional ranks.. In the 2016 Summer Games, Stevenson sailed through every stage of his Olympic competition in Rio De Janeiro before losing a close split decision in the bantamweight championship fight to 2012 flyweight Olympic gold medalist Robeisy Ramirez of Cuba. Ramirez swept the judges' scorecards in round one with Stevenson returning the favor in round two. In the third and final round, the closest of the three rounds, two of the three judges gave the round to Ramirez and the gold medal, by the slimmest of margins. It was the best finish for an American male boxer since Andre Ward captured the gold medal in the Athens Games of 2004. Newark came to a standstill each time Stevenson stepped into the ring in his quest to win Olympic gold. On the day he fought Ramirez, "Stevenson Fever" was at its peak. Barry Carter, columnist for the *Star-Ledger*, reported the following: "At Broad and Market streets, the city put its '24 Hour of Peace' rally on hold and set up a big screen for residents to watch the fight." At the CityPlex 12 Theater in Newark, hundreds of fans and family members wearing t-shirts emblazoned with "In Shakur's Corner," crammed in to see the fight, all sitting on the edge of their seats, to watch the live-streamed fight and cheer for their man.

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