

Properly Introducing Kermit Cintron

Written by Brian Adams
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In this day and age, in the sport of boxing, if you have a big amateur background or you don't have bizarre behavior, then you will have a rough time making it to the top. In addition to that, if you don't outwardly promote the Latino culture, it would be harder to grab the audience's attention. Felix Trinidad is considered the greatest Puerto Rican fighter to ever live (I like and know Tito but I disagree with that assessment), because he brings the fight to his opponent every single minute of every single round. Tito also refuses to speak English while doing interviews, instead opting to keep within his Spanish culture. With that being said, allow me to introduce to you a Puerto Rican boxer who has the personality and punch similar to Tito.

Kermit Cintron emerged on the scene as a real star last year when he knocked out hard-hitting veteran Teddy Reid in the 8th round on HBO. I do think it's fair to compare Kermit to Tito (with the exception of the popularity) because Kermit brings on the heat for as long as the bout lasts. The only difference would be that Kermit opts to speak English and he still yearns for that star spotlight because it will mean all his hard work has paid off.

I flew down to Houston, Texas the night Kermit faced Teddy Reid to root for a friend of mine, Zahir Raheem, who was on the undercard. I witnessed a fight that Kermit pretty much dominated, but it was the toughest bout of his career to date. Kermit took some big shots from the heavy-handed Reid, and if you've seen Reid in the past, then you know he has thunder in his fists. So the questions surrounding Cintron's heart and chin should never surface. For that bout Kermit held his training camp up in Deer Lake, the place where Muhammad Ali made famous.

Last week I traveled down to Reading, Pennsylvania to visit Kermit and his friend/trainer, Marshall Kauffman. I have been fortunate enough to develop a relationship with those two guys over the year. When Kermit and Marshall speak about boxing, it is as if they have the same mind. They understand the system and realize that each fight can make or break them. They feel that way because they have been going down this road alone for quite some time now. Kermit had no big amateur career; actually it was so little that it's almost like he had none at all. Kermit and Marshall would freelance early in his career because no big promoter took notice of him. It wasn't until his 13th fight that Main Events promotional firm finally took notice and signed him.

Main Events noticed that Kermit was still in the development stages, so like they do with all their talented prospects, they placed him in situations that could only make him better. Kermit has fought on NBC, ESPN and HBO, all against tough competition, but in winnable bouts. Kermit started to get some recognition, but unlike other prospects, he did not develop bad habits. Kermit, according to Marshall, does not go out to clubs or bars. He has a few hobbies. He likes golf and video games. Kermit's self-image is still the same as it was three or four years ago. He does regret not experiencing the fun of traveling as an amateur. (Don't be envious of that Kermit. I traveled that road but would gladly trade places with you). The more I hang around Kermit the more I notice how unfazed he is by the attention he gets.

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Although Kermit is not fully aware of his situation, Marshall is and recognizes how much of a superstar Kermit can be. I recall Mark Breland telling me that nice guys finish last in boxing. In Kermit's case I'm starting to believe it. Here is a guy who is really down-to-earth and who gives the fans what they pay their money for. The one thing that stands out in the public's and my mind is that Kermit has fragile hands (he has had 3 surgeries on his right hand) yet he still produces knockouts. I'm telling the readers now that something like that is special.

Kermit is scheduled to face Antonio Margarito for the WBO welterweight crown in Las Vegas on April 23rd. It's a bout that should place Cintron on the level that should make him the household name he deserves to be. The Latin community should embrace him because he has the same kind of fighting heart as Tito Trinidad, Jose Torres, Wilfredo Benitez, Sixto Escobar and Wilfredo Gomez. The world should embrace Kermit Cintron. He can be the type of role model the sport needs right now.

But Kermit Cintron is in a tight spot. Being humble and knocking guys out just don't add up in boxing these days. But if he decides to switch gears and become thuggish overnight (like most guys do), then the question is: will he be accepted or respected in the sport? Maybe he needs to give a shout out to the Island of Puerto Rico in Spanish before he does his English interview. In any event, I think the public should tune in to the ESPN PPV bouts on April 23rd to get properly introduced to a Puerto Rican puncher not named Trinidad.