

Danny Jacobs' Brownsville Roots

Written by Robert Mladinich
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Daniel Jacobs was born, raised, and still lives in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York, which he has proudly represented as an amateur boxer of international renown. Although the Beijing Olympics are still three years away, there is no shortage of boxing insiders who consider him a shoo-in to represent the United States there at either 165 or 178 pounds.

But the 18-year-old Jacobs, who has compiled an enviable record of 87-4 and a slew of local, national and international titles in just four years of boxing, is wise enough to realize he has to take one fight at a time.

The next stop in his quest for Olympic glory will be San Francisco, where he is scheduled to take on Marco Antonio Periban Hernandez of Mexico City in a Mexico vs. United States tournament at the San Francisco Civic Auditorium on Sunday, October 30.

The 21-year-old Hernandez, a veteran of 80 fights, is considered an Elite Amateur. He and Jacobs will compete at 165 pounds.

The way Jacobs sees it, Hernandez won't show him anything he hasn't seen before.

"Mexican fighters are tough, no doubt," said the laconic Jacobs who talks so mellow it seems he has nary a care in the world. "Most of them have hard heads, are good punchers, but have soft bellies. But they never stop coming. I'll be ready for him, just like I'm ready for everyone I fight."

As mellow as Jacobs sounds, he says that he is bundle of nerves in the hours before all of his fights. When he recently fought a rematch with an opponent he had already beaten easily, he said he still couldn't shake the pre-fight jitters.

"I don't know what it is – and most people don't believe me because I seem so relaxed," said Jacobs. "But once the bell rings, the switch is off. After that guy hit me, I never stopped throwing punches until I stopped him."

Jacobs only began fighting in a gym because he got sick of getting in trouble for fighting in the streets. He made his way to the Howard Houses boxing gym in his neighborhood, but now trains alongside such local hotshots as WBA welterweight champion Luis Collazo and top prospects Jaidon Codrington and "Mean" Joe Greene at the Brooklyn's Starrett City boxing gym.

"We all learn from each other," said Jacobs, who after just 12 months in the gym once beat an 11 year veteran. "Training with guys like that prepares you for anything."

Although Jacobs has already been bombarded with offers to turn pro, he is determined to represent the United States in Beijing and eager to cash in on the financial windfall that a gold

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medal will bring.

"I'm still young and I'm still learning," said the tall, strong and extremely fast Jacobs who was once described as having excellent ring vision. "The guys I most admire are Floyd Mayweather, Roy Jones and Zab Judah. Floyd and Roy were in the Olympics, and Zab came real close. Those guys are good boxers and good entertainers. They are swift, beautiful boxers. They are all that I want to be."

Although his boxing skills abound, Jacobs says his real "backbone" are two women in his life: his mother Yvette and his grandmother Cordelia. They, along with his extended family, all of whom live in close proximity to each other, have had as much to do with his success as his work in the gym.

"You can't put a price on their support," said Jacobs. "They mean everything to me. I don't want to just win a gold medal for me; I want to win one for my family."

Told that Brownsville was once a Jewish bastion, and Jacobs' name could easily be construed as being of Jewish lineage, Jacobs laughed uproariously.

"I have a lot of Jewish friends," he said. "When I turn pro they all tell me that I should tell the public that my grandfather was Jewish. They say that that could be worth as much [in marketability] as a gold medal."