

Pito Cardona's Comeback Starts Friday

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HARTFORD – Former USBA & NABF lightweight champion Israel “Pito” Cardona (34-6, 26 KOs) begins his long awaited comeback Friday night (March 17) in a six-round match against veteran Bobby McAndrews at Worcester (MA).

Cardona retired nearly four years ago at the age of 27 due to managerial problems, but his love of the sport as well as his burning desire to capture a major world title have led to Friday evening's return to the ring. “I was so frustrated with the sport I got out,” Cardona explained. “Eight months ago I weighed 190 pounds. I work the third shift as a lieutenant for a security company and eating late, well, it was easy putting on weight. I started working out to lose weight, trained with fighters like Ray Oliveira for his last fight and Matt Remillard, and decided I was going to give my boxing career one last chance.”

Cordova turned pro in 1993 and he won his first 24 fights, 18 by knockout, including a 12-round unanimous decision in 1995 against Jeff Mayweather (30-7-4) for the IBO super featherweight belt. After losing a 10-round split decision – only his second loss as a pro – to former IBF welterweight champion Charles “The Natural” Murray (39-4), Cardona followed with a stunning third-round knockout of “Mighty” Ivan Robinson (23-1) for the USBA lightweight title. Robinson had lost the IBF welterweight belt to Philip Holiday one fight prior to his bout against Pito and three fights later, Robinson beat Arturo “Thunder” Gatti for the first of two times in their 1998 Ring Magazine Fight of the Year.

“Pito” went on to win six in a row, including four successful USBA title defenses against Sam Girard (17-3-1), Richard Kiley (11-1-3), Golden Johnson (15-1-2), which was also fought for the NABF belt, and Joel Perez (24-2-2).

In his only major world title fight, Cardona lost a 12-round decision to undefeated Paul “The Pittsburgh Kid” Spadafora (26-0) for the vacant IBF lightweight championship. “Pito” retired after his 2002 loss by 10-round split decision to Miguel Figueroa (19-3-1).

“I’m taking things fight by fight,” Cardona said, “but, realistically, I’m going to have a few fights to get my feet wet. I’m stronger than ever and I’m going to make 147 easy. I plan on fighting at 140. Ultimately, I want to get the world title that I didn’t win. This is a dangerous sport and I’m in it again to be a world champion. I should have been world champion a long time ago. This is my last chance and I’m going for it.

“I was tired of the sport, the politics of boxing, and I was screwed a few times.

“But boxing’s in my blood and now I have a great team in my corner. I met my new manager, Bret Hallenbeck, and now everything is in the right place at the right time. I’m being co-trained by Scully and Alex Feleciano, who has been with me since the beginning, and Gary Italia is my nutritionist. I’ve been out almost four years and I’m still only 31. This is my last chance.”