

Jeffrey: Boxing Has Been Very Good To Me

Written by Robert Mladinich
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Although Ronica Jeffrey has squared off in front of thousands of fans while winning three New York City Golden Gloves titles at Madison Square Garden, she admits to being a bit nervous about making her pro debut on Thursday, January 31, at the Utopia Paradise Theater in the Bronx, New York.

The show, which will also feature the comeback of former light-heavyweight champion Lou Del Valle, as well as local favorites Elvir Muriqi, Efrain Joel Torres, Eddie Irizarry, Jon Schneider and Alicia Ashley is being promoted by Joe DeGuardia's Star Boxing.

The 24-year-old Jeffrey, a native of Grenada who resides in Brooklyn, will be facing Karen Dulin of Mystic, Connecticut, an experienced amateur who, like Jeffrey, will be making her pro debut.

"Everything is happening so fast and I'm just trying to ride the flow," said Jeffrey, who also attends the Wood Tobe Coburn Institute in Manhattan, where she is studying to become a medical assistant and dreams of someday being a pediatrician.

"I'm very nervous and excited, all in one. Fighting professionally is a new game. I think it's more mental than anything else, but I admit that I'm a little nervous."

One thing you can be sure of is that Jeffrey's jitters will dissipate once the bell rings. Her vast experience on the big stage should take her a long way.

In one New York Golden Gloves final, she soundly defeated Maureen Shea, who was the darling of the media at the time because of the recent release of the Academy Award winning film "Million Dollar Baby."

Shea was being touted as "The Real Million Dollar Baby" for her training with Hilary Swank, the star of the film. Scores of reporters from the entertainment media were on hand for the fight, which turned out to be a disappointment for them as well as Shea.

Jeffrey was also a national amateur champion who represented USA Boxing in such faraway places as India, Argentina, Colorado and California.

"Ronica had a great amateur career," said her manager, David Selwyn. "She faced lots of pressure and almost always came out on top. She beat Maureen Shea, who is now 12-0 as a pro. I hope to have Ronica fighting for a title before she has 12 fights. In female boxing, having 10 fights as a pro is like a man having 40. Ronica's amateur experience will have her ready to fight for a title sooner rather than later."

Jeffrey would love to make her living as a boxer, but is wise enough to understand the nuances and vagaries of the sport, especially as it pertains to females. She is probably the only boxer

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you will ever meet who discusses attending medical school as a “backup plan” in case boxing doesn’t work out.

“If boxing can create a career for me, that would be great,” she explained. “But there are so many ups and downs in the sport, I always want to have something to fall back on.”

When speaking with Jeffrey it is obvious that she is extremely intelligent and serious about all that she does. When she first entered Gleason’s Gym in Brooklyn it was to maintain her fitness and lose some weight.

Within just a few months, however, she had become great friends with such female stars as Alicia Ashley, Belinda Laracuenta and Melissa “Hurricane” Hernandez.

When she was encouraged to compete as an amateur by those women, as well as her trainer Mike Smith, she says that she had never even heard of the Golden Gloves tournament.

After roaring through the competition, she couldn’t believe she had made it to the finals of what is generally regarded as the most prestigious local amateur tournament in the world.

“I’m not a person who demands a lot of attention,” said Jeffrey. “Being the center of attention in a place like Madison Square Garden was tough. Even though I’ve been in the finals three times, I still got more nervous each year.”

Her family, which consists of her parents and two siblings, helps keep her grounded. She currently lives with her father Ronald, an electrician who has made many sacrifices to further her dual interests in boxing and education.

“With school and boxing, it’s hard for me to have a full-time job, so I am very grateful for the support that I receive,” said Jeffrey. “It gives me much more inspiration to be successful in everything I do.”

Jeffrey realizes that so much has happened to her in such a relatively short time. As quick a pace as her life is now, she can’t help but feed off of all the positive energy that comes from doing what she not only loves, but also excels at.

She is as goal oriented as she is fitness oriented, so she is certain that her pro debut will be the start of a wonderful year.

“Boxing has already been really good to me,” she said. “I’ve made great friends and feel like Gleason’s is my home. I probably spend more time there than anywhere else. Boxing has enabled me to see places I never would have seen, and to meet people I never would have met. I believe that it is only going to get better in the future, and I am very excited about that.”