

## Coulda Been An MMA Contendah

Written by Rick Folstad  
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How did this guy slip through the MMA's fingers? Weren't they paying attention? Weren't they reading the clips?

Are you telling me Dana White and the UFC didn't call? Didn't write? Didn't send him an e-mail? I guess no one explained to Denver junior-welterweight Mike Alvarado that his future - every fighter's future - was in the cage or the octagon. Not inside the ropes.

Or maybe Alvarado just avoided the sales pitch, didn't listen to the voice in his ear telling him boxing was a dinosaur, dead and soon to be forgotten. Maybe he knew better. After all, he did sign with promoter Bob Arum.

Alvarado is one of those two-sport stars. You know, like Bo Jackson and Deion Sanders and, ah,...well, there aren't too many of them. It's a short, special list. Hard to get on.

Alvarado's two sports are wrestling and boxing, which, like a brat and a cold beer are a pretty good combo if you're in the fighting business.

That's why Alvarado has the option of examining the career possibilities in the WEC or the MMA or the UFC or whatever other acronym they've come up with lately.

But it seems Alvarado likes eight-ounce gloves.

Alvarado's wrestling history includes two Colorado Class 4A state high school championships while at Skyview High School in Denver. He was 97-0.

His boxing career, which is starting to take off, includes a 21-0 record with 14 knockouts.

This guy ever lose?

Quick son. Sign here on the dotted line.

Where is Kimbo Slice to give him a few choice words of encouragement, sell him on the advantages of going into the arena barefoot and almost bare-handed?

Maybe later.

Right now, Alvarado is getting ready to fight former world lightweight champ Cesar Bazan on Saturday night. The fight is on the undercard of the welterweight title fight between Miguel Cotto and Antonio Margarito at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas (HBO, ppv). There will be no take downs, no headlocks, no knees to the groin. No elbows, no kicks, no tap outs. Strictly Marques of Queensbury.

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As for Bazan, he's pretty much over the hill at 33, losing four of his last seven fights, though world champions tend to pick up a few tricks along the way that stay with them for forever.

Bazan (47-10-1, 30 KOs) is a familiar name to Denver fight fans. He's the guy who took Stevie Johnston's WBC lightweight title from him back in 1998 when Stevie was Denver's world champion. Stevie won his title back a few months later. It was 10 years ago, but you can bet they still remember Bazan in the House of Pain.

Born and raised in Denver, Alvarado said he woke up one day after graduating from high school, and, after passing on college, decided he needed to do something with his life. And it wasn't working 40-hour weeks.

"I felt like I had too much talent to let it go to waste," he told the Rocky Mountain News. "I went to the 20th Street boxing gym (see "House of Pain" above) and it's been meant to be ever since."

The first time he got hit in the ring, Alvarado said he had second thoughts.

"I didn't know if I wanted to fight anymore," he said. "It was different, but I wanted to do it. It wasn't so bad. You get used to it when you learn how to take punches."

Too bad, MMA.