

PROVIDENCE - Demetrius Andrade has yet to turn professional but he already has two of everything - two parents, two trainers, two promoters. If his career goes the way those newly announced promoters, Joe DeGuardia and Art Pelullo, hope he one day may end up with two world titles as well...or maybe even more.

"This is a rare occurrence in boxing that two promoters come together like this," DeGuardia said at a press conference at the Dunkin Donuts Center Wednesday called to announce that the 2008 Olympian will make his pro debut Oct. 23 on Versus at an Indian casino in the state of Washington.

"Usually a fighter has one promoter," DeGuardia continued. "This is a testament to Demetrius and how we feel about him. We don't only expect him to become a champion. We don't only expect him to become a multiple champion. We are expecting a superstar."

Other than that, no pressure on the 20-year-old junior middleweight who was surrounded by what appeared to be half the politicians in Providence, which in that city is saying something. Andrade is the latest in what has become a steady stream of boxing talent emerging from the gyms in one of the union's smallest states, a stream that has produced former world champion Vinny Paz, top-rated cruiserweight Matt Godfrey, former Olympic team captain Jason Estrada and now Andrade among others.

For Andrade this opens a new chapter in a boxing story that turned into a sad comedy of errors in Beijing after many years of success in the amateurs. A reigning world champion (and the first American since 1999 to be able to claim any such an amateur title), Andrade arrived in China as a heavy favorite to medal. Many felt he was likely to win gold in the welterweight class but the team's turmoil was heightened when he was eliminated in the quarter finals in a hotly disputed decision.

That failure didn't affect DeGuardia's opinion of him however. The New York-based promoter had been in pursuit of Andrade for some time, believing from the first night he saw him box that he possessed not only special gifts but also the kind of personality that can transform a talented fighter into something more.

Pelullo, on the other hand, seldom pursues amateurs no matter how decorated they may be. He, like many promoters, waits to see what develops once a fighter turns professional and then moves in. Yet he was ready to make an exception in Andrade's case even before DeGuardia called and suggested they form an unusual partnership to co-promote a fighter each believes has the talent to become the prize of this Olympic year even if he failed to land any Olympic prize in Beijing.

"I went to Chicago to watch an amateur tournament and I saw all these kids," Pelullo recalled. "Then I saw him! He fought like a professional, not an amateur. He had greater skills."

TSS Prospect Watch: Demetrius Andrade

Written by Ron Borges

Wednesday, 24 September 2008 19:00

“I honestly believe we have one of the great young talents. He has more natural ability than most pros I know.”

A two-time national Golden Gloves champion, silver medalist at the Pan-Am Games, gold medalist at the 2007 World Championships and a 20-year old Olympian, Andrade is eager to get started on his professional career and convinced that having two of everything is really a sound way to go in boxing.

“My Dad put it all together,” Andrade said of his unusual promotional set up. “It’s great. If one doesn’t have a TV date the other one will. That will help me a lot. I’m about to pack the Dunk!”

That is a ways down the road but he did manage to pack a press conference inside the Dunk, an arena normally used for minor league ice hockey and concerts. It is very likely where he will make his first big mark in prize fighting and if he does it will come only a few miles from the 401 Gym where he first began training as a six-year old who was only to glad to follow his father, Paul, into a roped off square every night to study a difficult and sometimes painful craft.

“What I liked about it is boxing is the 1-on-1,” Andrade said. “It’s not a team thing. Boxing is truly a man’s sport. You learn who you are.”

You also, in time, learn who your opponents are. Boxing is universally thought of as the hurt business for a reason and the reason is that often times you have to feel pain to administer it. Pain is one of boxing’s few guaranteed by-products and dealing with it one of its most basic requirements.

Faced with such an eventuality, one wonders why a six-year-old chooses to walk that path. More to the point, why does a 20-year-old follow it night after night until he finds himself accomplished enough to be surrounded by two promoters and a room full of smiling politicians who are all putting upon his slight shoulders the hopes of an entire city?

“It’s really not the hurt business when you’re doing the hurting,” said Andrade, blinded by the innocence of youth. “I’m too pretty to get hit. I got a great jab, great defense. I’m in boxing because I chose it.”

Demetrius Andrade chose boxing and thus far it has chosen him. He became a member of the Olympic team, which was his first dream in the sport, and now he has received a six-figure bonus to sign with not one but two successful, veteran promoters who will labor to get him the opportunities that can make a young man a champion.

All he has to do, Pelullo reminded him, is the hard part. All he has to do is work...and win.

“I told Demetrius I’m 53. I can promote from a wheel chair when I’m 85,” Pelullo said. “I have 70 or 80 fighters I’ll promote. If he doesn’t make it I’ll be all right. But he has a short window in which to be successful. He has to do that part for himself.

“He said ‘That’s kind of cold.’ I told him that’s what the boxing business is. It’s a harsh place. I

TSS Prospect Watch: Demetrius Andrade

Written by Ron Borges

Wednesday, 24 September 2008 19:00

know Joe and I will do our job to get him opportunities. He's the one who has to win the fights.

"I reminded him how Bernard Hopkins was always ready. Never more than a couple of pounds over 160 pounds. He was always ready to do his job. If you're not, you won't fool anybody for every long.

"We believe he can be a superstar but he has to take it seriously. He has to do the fighting. To get what he wants he has to do the work. That's why I don't call a kid 'Champ' like some guys do. You ain't a champ until you earn it."

Art Pelullo is right about that. Being called "Champ" by people who don't know any better doesn't make you one. That only comes with blood, sweat and tears - your own.

Demetrius Andrade is about to learn about that side of boxing - the hurting side.