

Some careers get started in the most peculiar ways. For 21 year-old "Vicious" Victor Ortiz, it was his father's words that sent him on his way towards becoming one of boxing's hottest commodities. "We're not going to have any pu**es in this family," the old man said after he learned little Victor was getting beat up at school.

"I was a fat kid that was getting the crap beat out of me so my dad put me in the boxing gym," remembers Ortiz, who has a professional record of 23 wins and 1 loss with 18 knock-outs. "I hated it at first." After getting used to being punched in the face and a few bloody noses during sparring, he grew to love the competitive nature of the sport. He was happy to have found his calling. Unfortunately, things took a sad turn.

The Mexican American kid who grew up in Garden City, Kansas, of all places, got a harsh dose of life at the age of seven when his mother abandoned him and his siblings. "I thought we were a normal, happy family but I was wrong," Ortiz said. A few years later his alcoholic father followed suit, leaving the family to fend for themselves. "We were left with nothing. My sister had to be a mom to us when my parents left."

Putting himself in the role of a provider and needing to survive, Ortiz did what he had to do in order to help out the family. "I'm not going to lie. I dealt some ecstasy and some marijuana but I never tried it," Ortiz said. "I just dealt it. It wasn't a good thing to do but it got me my money when I really needed it."

His brief stint as a dealer ended once he got a taste of legitimate success. Ortiz saw his image in the newspaper after winning the Golden Gloves and it moved him. "The photo came out all over Kansas and that's when it hit me," Ortiz said of the epiphany. "I realized that I didn't need to be involved with selling drugs in order to make something of myself. I said screw this. I don't need all this crap or this guilt."

The first person he called was the guy who was wholesaling him the drugs he would later sell for a profit. "I called him and told him that this wasn't for me," Ortiz said. "I told him and everyone else that I was going to try and become a world champion and they just laughed. Eventually they said 'cool, we have your back'."

According to ESPN.com and SportsIllustrated.com, it may be "Vicious" Vic who gets the last laugh. Both outlets have just named the Golden Boy Promotions fighter as their prospect of 2008. The 140 pounder made sure he remained on everyone's mind after coming off a devastating first round knockout victory over Jeffrey Resto on the De La Hoya/Pacquiao undercard.

Ortiz remains humble nonetheless. "I'm just one of many other prospects. Just another up and coming fighter," he said. "I'm a guy that's been working hard and hoping it pays off."

TSS Prospect Watch: Victor Ortiz

Written by Ralph Gonzalez
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Although a likeable person with a laid back demeanor outside the ring, Ortiz more than lives up to his moniker once he's in battle mode. "I got that nickname at the Olympic trials. People were saying don't let that kid fool you with that smile, he's vicious," Ortiz said. "I don't see myself as vicious but everyone started calling me that so it stuck."

He's been refining his trade since he was a kid, winning one amateur show after the other. It was at the 2003 junior Olympics that former world champion and current trainer Robert "Grandpa" Garcia approached him. "I guess he liked my style and went back to Oxnard where he told his dad about me," Ortiz said. Garcia's father, Eduardo, was the trainer for well known champion Fernando Vargas. "Eventually he called me and asked me what I thought about coming to California to train and live with him. I said send me a plane ticket and I'm there."

He went from the flatlands of Kansas to the beaches and hills of Southern California. It was a welcome change that helped boost his career. "In California you have a lot of choices when it comes to training and you have a lot of good fighters to spar with," Ortiz said. "The move definitely helped bring my game up to another level."

He recently got a taste of some big time sparring after helping Oscar De La Hoya prepare for his fight with Manny Pacquiao in Big Bear. Ortiz is rumored to have more than held his own against Oscar but chooses to keep quiet regarding details. Oscar's eight round loss to Pacquiao came as a real shocker. "The Oscar I sparred with was not the Oscar that showed up against Manny on that night. I thought he was going to knock out Manny easy," Ortiz said. "I can't tell you what happened. The best that I can come up with is that he hit his weight too early and he was drained but I really don't know. That wasn't the Oscar I was expecting on that night. I don't think anyone expected that."

Although he's highly touted, Ortiz feels he has a lot to prove. "If anything, I have to prove something to myself. I want to succeed very badly. I've seen people who have everything and yet they're really unhappy and don't appreciate it," Ortiz said. "I don't want to be like that. I want to reach all my goals in life and I want to be someone that truly appreciates everything I earn. I've been working too hard and too long for it."

Will he fulfill the promise that boxing pundits believe he's capable of or will he be another hot prospect that goes bust? Anyone remember Francisco "Panchito" Bojado? He too was a prospect of the year at one time. I think things will be different with "Vicious" Vic.

Unlike Bojado, the reports are that Ortiz is a gym rat and takes proper care of his weight. "This is all I know how to be good at and I take it very seriously," Ortiz said. "I've got the dedication of a champion. I plan to work harder than everybody else. I'm smart enough to realize that I can't rest on my current success. I know that the hardest part of the journey is still ahead of me."

And that realization is what will make all the difference in the world.

To watch Ortiz vs. Resto: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQU-4f_0cxM