

Lawton's Legend Grady Brewer Faces Cuba's Lara

Written by David A. Avila

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Among those living in the southwestern parts of Oklahoma many know about the prizefighter Grady "Bad Boy" Brewer.

You might even call him a local legend.

From amateur boxer to "Toughman" contest winner to eventual world champion the legend of Brewer grows quietly but still expands.

Maybe it's because he won the seldom acknowledged IBC and IBA middleweight titles or maybe it's because he's rather quiet.

Shhh.

Brewer (26-11, 15 KOs) faces Cuba's former amateur star Erislandy Lara (9-0, 5 KOs) in a junior middleweight bout on Friday at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The Golden Boy Promotions card will be televised on Fox Television.

Nobody knows what to expect.

"It's an interesting fight," says Robert Diaz, matchmaker for Golden Boy.

For years Brewer accepted fights at the spur of a moment. Many times laboring to lose the required weight and other times lacking preparation time. In professional boxing that's a no no.

One reason he took so many fights without preparation is his fearlessness. He's plain unafraid of facing the monsters that everyone else avoids. Need examples?

How about Kelly Pavlik, Jermain Taylor, Peter Manfredo Jr. and Carlos Bojorquez all within his first three years of professional boxing.

That's a murderer's row.

"When I fought Carlos Bojorquez I was beating him but I ran out of gas," says Brewer, 39, who began fighting professionally at 29. "I dropped him in the first round in that fight. I think I broke my hand when I dropped him. That's what got me where I lost focus. I learned from it and that's where I am right now."

Injuries are another obstacle for Brewer. Lately, with age, he seems to be over that injury hump. He hasn't lost a fight since losing to Marco Antonio Rubio nearly five years ago.

It could have been over for the Oklahoma native years ago but when the second season of the popular Contender reality television series looked for participants they found Brewer.

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Sometimes it takes a legend to spot the intrinsic qualities of other fighters. When Sugar Ray Leonard first saw Brewer he recognized certain innate qualities.

"He's a very interesting intriguing young man. He's really quiet unless you push him too far," said Leonard by telephone. "He reminds me of myself. Personally I'm quiet unless you push me too far. I see that in Grady."

During the second season of the Contender the Oklahoma fighter was often overlooked until it was too late. Wins over Vinroy Barrett, Michael Stewart, Norberto Bravo and Steve Forbes in the finals sent a buzz in the boxing world.

"He kept surprising people throughout the competition. This guy truly believes in himself and has one of the most unorthodox styles. It's not pretty to look at but effective," said Leonard who is currently working on a book of his life story in and out of the ring. "He stood in the ring like he was a champion. Not like a Floyd Mayweather or myself, but calm. You knew there was something else under his sleeve."

Brewer last fought in the summer where he was placed against undefeated Albert Onolunose of Canada. After one round of feeling out the younger fighter the Oklahoman lowered the boom with an uppercut from hell. It was brutally over and Brewer stood there with his arms raised high just like in the final of the Contender.

Onolunose's brother Jegbefumere told Brewer he wanted to avenge his brother. Sadly, the two Nigerian natives were later arrested for allegedly committing fraud. Then boxing super star Winky Wright challenged Brewer. The fight was to take place in Puerto Rico but it was canceled at the last moment.

"I was going to fight Winky Wright at middleweight. But I would like to campaign at junior middleweight. I have a chance to compete at that level," says Brewer who doesn't care who literally rings his bell. "Because of the money and who he is Paul Williams would be a great opportunity. I'd put everything on the table for that fight."

Lawton's legend will have his hands full against Cuba's lanky left-handed bomber Lara, 26, who amassed hundreds of fights as an amateur.

If Brewer can avoid weight and injury problems he can compete with anyone says his own history and other legends.

"I think it's a big fight without question," says Leonard whose legendary fights in the 1980s put a sizzle into pro boxing. "It throws him back into the pot. He's been very inactive. It's a fight that's puts him back in the heads of the boxing public."

Brewer is well aware of his place.

"After this fight I'm going to be done with fighting prospects. It's time for me to step up to the plate. After I clean house with this guy I'm looking to fight a bunch of guys. Let everybody

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know," said Brewer.

Lawton's legend has spoken.

Now it's time for action.