

Please Put Michael Oliveira On Your Prospect Watch List....WOODS

Written by Michael Woods

Tuesday, 22 March 2011 10:21



Boxing in Brazil got a nice pop when Acelino "Popo" Freitas spent some time in the sun, and redirected a portion of the attention of the soccer-made nation to the prizefight ring. Freitas was a super featherweight champion from 1999-2004, and won lightweight belts in 2004 and 2006. He exited the game following a loss to Juan Diaz in 2007, with a 38-2 mark.

There's a young man born in Brazil currently living in Miami, Michael Oliveira, who has designs on achieving a Freitas-level of success in the realm of pugilism. The 20-year-old Oliveira has already made immense inroads, a bit shocking since the 13-0 prospect had just two amateur fights under his belt. But Oliveira, who fights as a super middleweight, and gloves up in his native Brazil on March 25th, was named Brazil's athlete of the year in 2009 and 2010. No small

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feat, considering he beat out Helio Castroneves, Nene, Anderson Varejao and MMAer Anderson Silva, who is considered the best of his breed.

TSS chatted with the soft-spoken Oliveira, who mixes a humble style with a strong attitude of ambition and confidence.

He explained his goal of lifting boxing's profile in Brazil, where he lived for 15 months before his parents moved to the US.

"I fought there my last fight, and now this one, against Abel "El Principito" Nicolas Adriel, for the Interim World Boxing Council Latino Super Middleweight Championship," he said. "I'm trying to change people's vision of boxing in Brazil. But I do still want to fight in the US, it's where I live.

"People in Brazil don't know too much about boxing. It's soccer...and soccer...and soccer! I'm trying to bring boxing back."

He's going about it the right way. Oliveira is dedicating his upcoming bout to a little boy named Dennis, just six years old, who can't walk and has speech issues. The boxer and his dad Carlos, who manages him, heard about Dennis, and how he didn't have access to surgery he needed to fix ligaments in his legs, so he could walk. The Oliveiras paid for the surgery, and Dennis will appear at the title fight. "Dennis told me, 'I wish I could do what you do.' That helps me see how lucky I am not to have any physical problems. And it helps me stay motivated, a kid like that, purely innocent."

The fight against Adriel will be shown live in Brazil on TV Globo, the third largest TV network in the world, and on replay in the States. We'll be able to assess Oliveira, see if what we've been hearing is true, that he's been able to accelerate to this level because of an excess of athleticism. The boxer says he sees himself having a mega-marquee bout--maybe against Julio Cesar Chavez Jr?--by the end of next year. "But things change so quickly in boxing," he said. "So I'm willing to face anyone."

If and when Oliveira is able to reach Freitas-level popularity, he should easily be able to branch out, into my milieu. A diet book, How To Box The Pounds Off, or something to that effect, would make infinite sense. You see, Oliveira weighed 250 pounds when he was 15 years old, and trimmed the flab off in the gym.

Let's put this guy on our short watch list of TSS Prospects to Watch, shall we, off his rapid rise, his ambition and desire to improve and excel, and his heart and conscience.

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