Written by Michael Woods
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Thurman sent Quintana (right) into retirement. Could he convince Zaveck to do the same on March 9 in Brooklyn? (Hogan Photos)

I was talking to a boxing manager the other day and he was telling me he doesn't care for the attitudes of many of the boxers today. When he hears a kid he's contemplating signing say, "Skills pay the bills," he said, he's inclined to put away the pen and paper. No, signing cuties

who prize not getting hit more than inflicting punishment isn't on his to do list. That manager doesn't manage Keith Thurman, but Thurman, who fights March 9 at Barclays Center, is the sort of throwback attacker who he'd maybe like to have in his stable.*

The 19-0 Clearwater, Florida resident, who has 18 knockouts to his credit, spoke to TSS about the March 9 bout, against ex champ Jan Zaveck, his rise to this place and why boxing has been good to him.

"I'm psyched to fight in NYC on March 9 at the Nets Center (aka Barclays Center,)," Thurman told me. "New York is one of those legendary boxing capitals I've yet to enter, and it feels really great to hit New York up."

The bout is a WBO welterweight title eliminator. Tim Bradley holds the WBO crown currently.

FYI HBO televises the March 9 card, starting at 9:30 PM ET.

Thurman opened eyeballs when he took out Brandon Hoskins on the May 5, 2012 Mayweather-Cotto PPV undercard, more yet more when he stopped Orlando Lora on the July 21, 2012 Broner-Escobedo undercard on HBO, and exponentially more when he stopped (TKO4) slick vet Carlos Quintana on Nov. 24, 2012, underneath the Guerrero-Berto scrap, again on HBO. Zaveck is probably a step up from Quintana, and Thurman isn't assuming he's going to blast him out with ease.

"Zaveck I know is a very tough and durable fighter, he's been in with world champs, he's an ex world champion, he's 36 and knows if he wants to be champ again the time is now."

Good assessment from the fighter, who grew up in a single parent household, with his mother holding the fort after she and dad split. He got into boxing at age 7, and found a mentor in trainer Benjamin Getty, who was with Thurman until he died, from diabetes, in May 2009.

Thurman won silver at the 2008 Olympic trials, to Demetrius Andrade, and turned down a slot as an Olympic alternate. He turned pro in November 2007.

Thurman, now trained by Dan Birmingham, isn't shy about trying to separate his foes' head from their shoulders, or calling out those presently higher than him on the ladder. "I called out big fighters in my HBO debut, I called out Malignaggi, Bradley, Floyd Mayweather, I created buzz. People maybe said why is he calling people out, he hasn't done anything. I don't claim to have done anything but to I want to show you what I'm about to do. It's about letting the world know the future of boxing is Keith "One Time" Thurman."

And that nickname, "One Time," where does that come from? Thurman said his dad back in the day would throw hands with buddies, and he'd often put someone down with a single body shot. "I am Keith Thurman Junior, I might as well take his nickname. I didn't announce that nickname till I had eight first round KOs, I didn't want to brand myself right off the bat, I wanted to show what I can do."

I'm always curious to hear the good sides of the sport, how boxing helped a kid make something of himself. So I asked Thurman if boxing has been good to him.

"Boxing has been great for me, it's all I've done my whole life, it's truly a blessing," he answered. "My hood was not the worst but it was not the best. Boxing kept me off the streets, it opened my mind, showed me that I can achieve and be something. I probably would have been able to do something in life but boxing helped me channel my energies. It can be frustrating when your hormones are changing, and boxing can help by channeling that, turning that into something positive. I recommend boxing to young children especially children of single mothers. If you got a rec center near you with boxing, you might want to consider taking your kid there, they can learn discipline, and train, and focus and not giving up. There are a lot of positive things going on in the sport."

So, if he gets past Zaveck, who's next?

Tim Bradley's name comes up. "I scouted him and didn't see nothing special. He comes in shape, lets his hands go. As a fighter, he's not Adrien Broner, I don't see that extra, that somethin' special. I got that one time power, you better believe I got that something special. If

you decided to fight me, that's not a smart decision."

I simply think, if you want to make the most headway fastest in the sport, and make the most money, you're wise to focus on stopping people. Lord knows, that mindset is that much wiser today, what with so many judges turning in such dreadful cards...So, why does Thurman crave KOs? "My original trainer, Ben Getty, taught me to never leave it up to the judge, they don't know what they're watching," Thurman said. "Often, they're a lot older gents, with glasses, bifocals, trifocles, dirty smudged glasses, they gotta clean them every five seconds. Also, there's a lotta politics. You gotta put politics out the window."

And us human animals also get off on the controlled violence of the KO, right? "If you score a KO or not, fans are happy you are putting forth the effort. I know if I'm looking for a KO, that's dangerous, it can open me up to be knocked out. But people like watching fighters like me. I'm happy to be on scene, doing what I do best, which is creating knockouts."

Speaking of the KOs, does he see a need to stop Zaveck quicker than Andre Berto did when they met in Sept. 2011 (Zaveck couldn't answer bell for round six because his right eye was closed). Would that not be a helpful compare and contrast for fans and suits to see? "If I can do it quicker than Berto that'd be nice. Berto never knocked him down, I don't think Zaveck has been knocked down his whole career. You tell me, 'Mr. One Time, this guy has a good chin,' that sounds like a test to me. Put me in a ring with 8 ounces gloves, everybody goes to sleep."

And what about his chin? "I'm quite durable," Thurman said. "Some think I haven't took enough punishmen, but boxing is hit and not get hit. We'll see what happens. One day I'll get tagged, but I've been tagged in fights, in sparring many times. I'm ready.

"Ben Getty told me everybody can be knocked out, the human body can only take so much. If I get caught with a shot, with a critical blow, you might see my legs go one day. It's the risk every fighter takes."

*=A shorter version of this story ran on ESPNNewYork.com.

Comment on this article

deepwater says:

I sure as hell hope not. thurman has power just like charlie z (the nut that fought mayweather sr) has power. its the sweet science for a reason. limited power punches usually get out boxed and fade away. carlos q. was retired even b4 the thurman fight, carlos had a prime run and it pretty much fizzled after paul williams fight.carlos q was way past his experation date. I would even suggest that feather fisted paulie malignaggi would win a 12 rounder vs thurman.

amayseng says:

i dont know deep, thurman is for sure a hitter, but he has good fundamentals as well.
he is accurate, has good speed and places shots well...
he isnt just swinging for the fences like a maniac, he has controlled firepower..

Radam G says:

"One Time" is a one-funny-trick ostrich -- a flightless retite bird. He and his team are working a wonderful optical illusion on da know nothings and bandwagon jumpers. He is like the U.S. dollar -- weak, but excitingly love by those who don't know that GOLD is what you need to HOLD.

Y'all oughta listen to Deepwater. Paulie would indeed put some feather-fisted magic on the One Time clown and knock him down. Keith Thurman would be bytch crying: "I've fallen! And I can't get up." Hehehe! Holla!

SouthPaul says:

I'm listening. Keith definitely talks a better game than he shows. And even then his verbal game is lacking too. All these trash talkers need to YouTube Naseem HAmed. That lil pint of Muslim was witty and funny as hell and still is. Broner, Thurman, MAyweather, buncha scripted bozos . Peep out Naz. He'll take you to funny man school.

deepwater says:

I hope thurman can bring some excitment but I know his style. thurman reminds me of kid diamond.we wont know about thurman until he fights a live guy. kid diamond= Raiymkulov turned professional in 2001. After he started his professional career he won 20 fights without any losses or draws. In June 2005 Raiymkulov had match for World Champion Title in New York, Madison Square Garden against 4 time Lightweight World Champion Cuban Joel Casamayor. After 12 rounds, the HBO scoring were giving Kid Diamond a win with a 116-111 score, but the match was ruled a draw. Following the draw, Diamond entered a bout against Nate Campbell as a heavy favorite and with much hype, but was outclassed and knocked out on the bout. In 2006 Raiymkulov became NABF Champion, defending four times his title. He later lost to Antonio DeMarco and hasn't fought since.

SouthPaul says:

I remember that fight. I have it recorded on VHS. I recall Kid Diamond being pretty raw and primitive in his fighting style but could punch fairly well.

Real Talk says:

Fresh blood, comes to bring it and can crack. Works behind his jab. Tito Trinidad comes to mind. We got any complete boxers like Bernard Hopkins or any fast handed combo punchers with a golden jab like Oscar? Time will tell if One Time is the real or an imposter. C'mon wit it then give us good bouts and shockers. He's on the road to the riches is it anyone that can stop ya? Rumble young man rumble I for one won't knock ya, bring ya A to the game and make sure ya paid proper. Dueces

deepwater says:

[QUOTE=Real Talk;26360]Fresh blood, comes to bring it and can crack. Works behind his jab. Tito Trinidad comes to mind. We got any complete boxers like Bernard Hopkins or any fast handed combo punchers with a golden jab like Oscar? Time will tell if One Time is the real or an imposter. C'mon wit it then give us good bouts and shockers. He's on the road to the riches is it anyone that can stop ya? Rumble young man rumble I for one won't knock ya, bring ya A to the game and make sure ya paid proper. Dueces[/QUOTE]

I hope thurman can keep knocking people out but real talk you should do 100 pushups and 100 situps right now for even mentioning the great trinidad with thurman. on his 19th fight tito fought ibf champ maurice blocker(blocker was legit) I miss going to trinidad fights at the garden. it was a real crazy fun time. cotto packed the garden too but tito brought in alot more energy from the fans.

ali says:

I don't think Thurman is that good once he gets in there with a good boxing that can take a punch he's going to get schooled. Deepwater r u ok? I not high on Thurman but he will but magic man Paulie is done fam.

deepwater says:

[QUOTE=ali;26385]I don't think Thurman is that good. Once he gets in there with a good boxer that can take a punch he's going to get schooled. Deepwater r u ok? I not high on Thurman but he will beat the brakes off the magic man Paulie is done fam.[/QUOTE]

Yeah Paulie is on the way out but he can beat one diminsional Thurman .