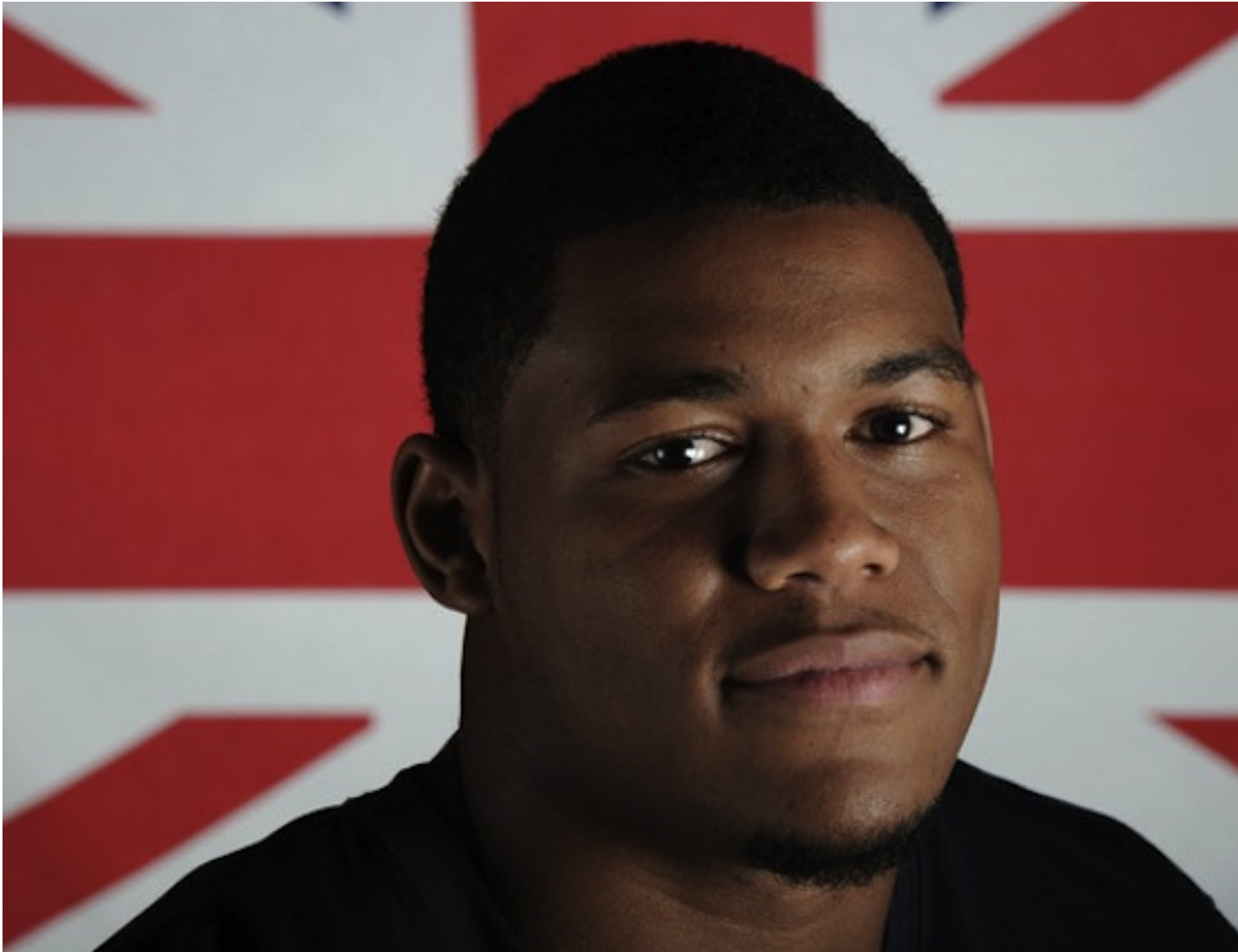


Here Comes Michael Hunter

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Friday, 08 March 2013 09:42



In boxing, the changes to what a competitor must do from what he learned as an amateur are some of the most pronounced among all sports. Gone is the headgear and overly padded gloves. The bouts are longer; the scoring, different. In basketball, the players might have to adjust to the length of the three point line, but the goal is still ten feet high and they still wear shoes. In football, touchdowns are still worth six points and the competitors do not suddenly stop wearing helmets.

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But this is boxing.

Michael Hunter, Jr., a two time national champion and 2012 Olympian knows all of this already, and he's anxious to give it a go anyway.

This is a boxer.

"I think the amateurs restricted allowing me to express myself in the ring," he told TSS. "They don't allow you to do certain things, and in the pros you have a lot more freedom. My nickname was the Professional Amateur, so I think it's going to be a lot easier for me to make that transition. I just have to slow down the pace, just change a few things here and there."

Hunter is intelligent and affable. His voice is soft, and his responses elicit a friendliness not usually found among those choosing the brutal toil of fists over more agreeable comforts found in almost all other vocations. Make no mistake, though, he's a fighter through and through. The twenty-four year does not lack confidence.

"That's the ultimate dream for me, to be the heavyweight champion of the world...to be the new big star as far as boxing is concerned. That's my dream. That's what I want to do, you know? I want to be the new face in boxing as far was heavyweights go."

Hunter has the pedigree. His father, Mike Hunter, Sr., was a heavyweight contender in the 1990s. He worked as a sparring partner for Mike Tyson and notched wins over notables Oliver McCall, Pinklon Thomas and Tyrell Biggs before his career was derailed by drug addiction. Junior told TSS his chief inspiration is his father, who was tragically gunned down in 2006 during a Los Angeles police sting.

"It's still difficult," the fighter said about dealing his father's passing. "I'm just trying to fulfill...well, he never won the heavyweight championship...never really got a shot at it, and I would just like to fulfill that, and just take on what he left behind."

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Hunter said he's had a leg up on the competition ever since he was a kid. He comes from three generations of fighters and said he was constantly around the sport because of it. Even when he wasn't fighting, he said, he was studying the science of the sport with his eyes.

"When I was growing up, and at first I just thought it was natural, I realized I understood a lot more about boxing than kids my age because I watched it every day. I was in the gym every day watching and learning."

Hunter parlayed that knowledge into numerous amateur accolades which culminated in the 2012 London Olympics. While he enjoyed his time as an amateur, he always looked at the time spent there as a stepping stone to becoming a professional. Mostly, he said, being a professional will allow him to finally be himself.

"Boxing is about entertainment, and that's what I like to do. That's how I express myself in the ring. In the amateurs, they make you have one particular style...it's all about a point system. In the pros, they allow you to be yourself, to do things you can't do in the amateurs."

Boxing is about winning, too, of course, and Hunter said he knows he will ultimately be judged by his win-loss record. When asked which of his finely tuned amateur skills will translate best to the tough scruff of professionalism, Hunter aptly submitted a multi-faceted answer.

"My biggest strengths are my mind, my speed and my boxing background."

Hunter's trainer is Kenny Crooms, a modestly successful light middleweight from the late 70s who is also helping fulfill managerial duties for the time being. Hunter said he and Crooms are still the process of building a team, and that he doesn't really have any specific manager or promoter right now. He wants to take things slow while he sets the stage for what he's hoping is a world class career. While talks with big name promotional companies such as Top Rank and Golden Boy have been had, Hunters said he wasn't anxious to sign anything until he gets the deal he wants. He's keeping his options open.

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Hunter's plan is to fight ten times this year, though he realizes he's already a bit behind.

"It's still early, though, so that's what I'd like to do for my first year and maybe about the same for my second year at eight or nine fights. Athletes, especially boxers, only have a small window for their careers, and a lot of people don't make it out with their right mind, so I want to get in and then get out of there."

Hunter is a thinker. He said he has many interests outside of boxing, and that he's already planning for whatever comes after. It's a refreshingly mature approach to a ring career, one too often left to ends instead of beginnings.

With an eye to the future, TSS finished up the discussion by asking where the talented heavyweight, bravely stepping into the harsh world of professionalism, saw himself ten years from now.

"Hopefully, I'll be thinking about retirement! In ten years, I want to be on top of the world as far as boxing is concerned and thinking about just a couple more fights before moving on to other aspects of my life. I don't just want to be known as a boxer. I have a lot of different dreams, goals and aspirations I want to accomplish. Hopefully, I'll be known for all of them!"

Michael Hunter will make his professional debut in the heavyweight division on March 9 at the Celebrity Theater in Phoenix, Arizona. The event will be promoted by [Iron Boy Promotions](#). You can follow the fighter on twitter

[@MHunter2012](#)

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