

The Unusual Journey of Melinda Cooper

Written by David A. Avila

Thursday, 24 March 2011 22:11



Melinda “La Maravilla” Cooper is unlike other girls or even other female fighters. The Las Vegas brunette doesn’t spend days and nights on Twitter or Facebook, she would rather read poetry or biographies when not at one of her three jobs.

She’s a very unusual woman of supreme talent.

Even Cooper’s career is unusual. Despite winning a flyweight world title in 2005 at age 19, the petite boxer with a quiet demeanor has not engaged in another world title fight.

That will change in Costa Rica when Cooper (21-0, 11 KOs) travels to Central America to face former bantamweight world champion Ada Velez (18-3-3, 6 KOs) for the vacant IBF title on Thursday, March 31. It won’t be televised in the United States.

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"I'm very excited to be fighting for a world title again," said Cooper, 26, who's a native of Las Vegas.

Critics may wonder why it's taken so long for the demure prizefighter to finally compete for another world championship but the fault is not Cooper's. It's very difficult to find opponents willing to face a legendary fighter whose exploits have been bandied about for over a decade. Yes, legendary.

Ever since trainer James Pena laced up gloves on Cooper the Las Vegas boxer has displayed blinding speed, power and quick absorption of boxing's do's and don'ts. And so have opponents.

"Don't fight Cooper" seems to be the mantra of female prizefighters from flyweights to junior featherweights.

Who can blame them?

After more than 15 years of dominating the sport including a spotless record after nine years as a professional, Cooper's prowess has sent shivers worldwide to potential opponents.

Last December she was scheduled to fight Fredee Gonzalez in that fighter's home country Mexico. Gonzalez canceled at the last moment claiming she was overweight. A few weeks later that same fighter opted to fight leading junior featherweight contender Jackie Nava rather than get beat up by Cooper.

One reason might be that Cooper twice fought in Mexico and dominated Miriam Avila in front of her home audience. Mexican fans are not accustomed to seeing one of their native fighters resort to survival tactics. It's not their way. Cooper doesn't allow them an alternative. It's run or get knocked out.

Now here comes Velez. She fears no one.

The Puerto Rican prizefighter has fought anyone willing to face her. While others were unwilling to step in the ring with speedy Kaliesha West, the Boricua from Florida traveled to California and fought to a draw after six rounds.

Now Velez faces another tremendous prizefighter with even more power. Cooper respects her opponent and everyone she's ever fought in the ring.

"I respect and admire every female fighter that shows up to the gym or steps in the ring," said Cooper, who is currently attending college.

Uniqueness is what attracted Southern California business woman Claudia Ollis to sign on as Cooper's advisor.

"She is very sweet and soft-spoken," said Ollis who advises Cooper on matters outside of the

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ring. "Melinda is very appreciative of anyone who helps her toward her goals."

Ollis said that MTV is currently discussing using Cooper as a subject on one of its upcoming shows. Another television project is also in discussions that includes the Las Vegas boxer.

"I believe Melinda Cooper is going to be the next superstar," said Ollis, adding that she also has other female fighters with superstar potential.

Fame is fine for Cooper, but inside the boxing ring the hard-working Las Vegas student zeroes in toward dismantling opponents. She never looks to win by decision; it's the knockout or destruction that she seeks like a diminutive cruise missile.

Promoter Sampson Lewkowicz signed Cooper last year when he spotted the female boxer brushing aside a tough Mexican fighter like tumble weed.

"She fights like a man," said Lewkowicz who's known internationally for discovering boxing talent like Sergio Martinez, Michael Katsidis and Manny Pacquiao. "She is one of the best female fighters in the world."

Lewkowicz also notes that Cooper is also one of the sports prettiest fighters but once she begins to fight, her talent is obvious.

"You need to see her to believe it," Lewkowicz says.

Walking among regular people in the casino capital of the world Cooper doesn't look like the extraordinary boxer that other boxers fear. She's just another attractive girl in a city that attracts people.

Don't expect to reach her by one of the social networks that dominate most other female's time today.

"I seldom go on Facebook," Cooper says.

However, you can count on Cooper entering the gym like clockwork.

She's a very unusual talent.

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the Roast says:

Eggs?

Radam G says:

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YUP! Eggs, dat is an order! Come back up in the Universe. We need cha, DUDE! Ain't got nuffin' but luv fo' ya! Holla!

brownsugar says:

Eggs please we need to hear it from your own pc.

the Roast says:

Pete has not checked in here at TSS since 2-13 according to his page. I hope he comes back. All the Regs make this place great. No matter if we agree or disagree we are all brothers in the love of boxing.