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Boxing might not exist without guys like Grady Brewer (30-14, 16 KOs). Guys like Brewer stay focused and ready to fight anyone, anywhere, and they’re good enough at their craft to win fights no one thought they could.

Sure, it's the *one-percenters* in the game who get all the accolades and attention. Those guys live off the fat of the land and reap enormous benefits the likes of which only the wealthiest of the wealthy are able to understand.

Even more, when it comes time to enshrine into Canastota the best of the era, the same thing will hold true: those who benefited the most during their time in the sport will also be the first (and likely only) ones served by the voters. It's like that in every sport.

But make no mistake, the kings of the boxing world (the ones who come to the rings with their "posses" and hangers-on shouting ridiculous things like "money team") don't have what they have without guys like Grady Brewer.

I caught up with Brewer last weekend after his recent bite fight win over Giorbis Barthelemy . We talked about his career and what he still hopes to achieve at the ripe old age of forty-one.

Brewer was born in 1970 in Lawton, Oklahoma. If you know anything about boxing, it's that almost nobody in boxing is from Lawton, Oklahoma.

Like most successful pugilists, Brewer picked up the gloves early. While other kids in the early 1980s were enthralled in silly things like the mythology of Star Wars, Brewer was lacing up his boxing gloves at the tender age of eleven to participate in the manly art of fisticuffs.

Brewer made a name for himself at his local Boys Club. He won 40 fights as an amateur including the Oklahoma Golden Gloves, but he didn't see himself as a professional fighter until much later in life when he won a local toughman competition.

"I started when I was young," Brewer said. "I was doing it for trophies and fun."

Brewer didn't become a professional boxer until he was twenty-nine years old. When most fighters are reaching the pinnacle of their careers, Brewer was just getting started.

At first, things started as well as he could have hoped. He won his very first fight by first round knockout, but the victory party would not last long. After starting out undefeated in his first five professional fights, Brewer lost in his sixth to journeyman Jesse Gonzalez (a guy who lost his next three straight to other guys you've never heard of).

It was an auspicious start for the fighter who would one day be crowned on national television a contender.

Things didn't really get any easier afterwards either, but Brewer knew he found what he wanted to do with his life. He wanted to be a professional prizefighter.

"I started to enjoy it even more then – the glory of it. I love boxing. I love it."

Brewer's ninth professional fight was against future middleweight world champion Kelly Pavlik. He was knocked out in just two rounds.

There would be nine more losses on his ledger between 2001 and 2006 against a mixed bag of opponents. For every loss to a notable name like Jermain Taylor or Peter Manfredo, Jr., there were multiple head scratchers against *has-beens* and *never-weres*.

"I took some fights that I didn't have time to train for, so I lost maybe one fight or two because of that," Brewer said of those days. "I know I would've won those fights had I had the proper time to train. I know that in my heart."

Despite the grimness, Brewer remained undeterred.

In a sport like boxing, a fighter's career can be devastated by just one loss. After three or four, a fighter might not ever be seen or heard from again (at the world level at least). Sure, he can find fights here or there on riverboats and Indian casinos, but any semblance of a legitimate boxing career flies right out the window. Eleven losses on a fighter's resume are nails in a coffin.

Grady Brewer's career was all but over, but then, somehow, it really started.

Being cast on ESPN's reality television show, *The Contender: Season Two*, turned out to be just the opportunity Brewer needed. Likely brought there by the producers to just be an opponent, to round out the group, Brewer came out on top of an impressive field that included future world titlists Steve Forbes and Cornelius Bundrage.

"It definitely turned my career around," Brewer said about being on the show and winning the tournament. "From that point on, I felt like losing just wasn't in the equation for me."

Brewer's career took off after that. He rode an eight-fight win streak all the way to 2010 when he ran into formidable contender Erislandy Lara. Lara won by tenth round TKO, so by 2011 Brewer was once again written off as just a competitor. He was then matched up against undefeated prospect Fernando Guerrero to be just that, but knocked the young up-and-comer out in four rounds.

Perhaps it would have been fitting to end his career at that point, but Brewer chose to fight on. He lost his next two fights but has now won two in a row, including his IBO Inter-continental junior middleweight title win this month over the aforementioned disqualified Barthelemy. Brewer plans to continue his career and aims to prove his naysayers wrong.

"I'm just looking to either defend it or fight a world champion," he said. "It's whatever comes next. I'm ready for whatever."

Brewer knows the opportunities can come from nowhere. He's seen it before, and he knows how to capitalize. When asked about his chances of securing a big fight, Brewer's approach is the same he's used his whole boxing life. He said he was still as driven as ever (if not more)

and knows what he can still do if given the opportunity.

“My chances are as good as anyone’s,” he said. “My thing is to just stay ready.”