

Ready To Rumble

Former Bengal Bouts standout Mike Lee looking for third professional win in as many fights

BY JOHN HAYNSWORTH

Mike Lee (2-0-0) will step into the ring for the third time in his blossoming professional boxing career on Nov. 13 when he faces Keith Debow (0-2-1) in a scheduled four-round bout on the undercard of Manny Pacquiao versus Antonio Margarito at Dallas Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

The 2009 Notre Dame graduate and three-time Bengal Bouts champion (2007-09) in the 175-pound division was impressive in his first two professional wins, which included a second-round knockout of Alex Rivera (2-4-0) in a scheduled four-round fight at the Palms Resort and Casino in Las Vegas on Sept. 11.

MIKE LEE VS. KEITH DEBOW

Date: Nov. 13, 2010
 Site: Dallas Cowboys Stadium, Arlington, Texas
 Start Time: 7 p.m. ET
 Video Feed: <http://www.TopRank.com>

"My growth as a fighter within the past eight months has been dramatic," said Lee. "I know I'm getting better and better every day, which is exactly what I want early in my pro career."

In his first fight against Emmit Woods (0-5-2), Lee outlasted a fighter that has never been knocked out in his career and won all four rounds on all three judges' scorecards in a unanimous decision.

Although a win in his debut was encouraging, Lee felt he really started to hit his stride as a professional against Rivera in a fight that ended at 2:59 in the second round after a devastating left hook to the body that sent his opponent to the canvas.

"That's one of the things that I've really improved on and have been working on in this camp with [trainer Ronnie Shields]," said Lee. "That's one of those things that start to wear on you. As I start to fight six to eight rounds, you're going to see guys breaking down pretty fast, because I do like going to the body."



Former three-time Bengal Bouts champion Lee is set to face Keith Debow Nov. 13 at 7 p.m. ET in the Dallas Cowboys Stadium (Arlington, Texas). A victory would make him 3-0-0 on his career.

PHOTO COURTESY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Although Debow is still searching for his first win in his fourth professional fight, he does possess a one-inch height advantage, which Lee acknowledged he'll have to overcome. However, he expects his work with 2003 World Boxing Hall of Fame Trainer of the Year Ronnie Shields, who has worked with notable champions including Mike Tyson, Vernon Forest, Evander Holyfield, among others, to be enough to give him the edge on Nov. 13.

"We come into each fight with a different game plan," said Lee. "We have a game plan for this one that we've been working on in the gym. I'm going to use my strength and use my athleticism, and hopefully he'll be another speed bump to get over."

Lee's rise into the professional ranks comes from rather unusual beginnings by comparison to other successful competitors in the sport of boxing. The Benet Academy (Lisle, Ill.) graduate got his first taste of boxing as a senior in the spring of 2005 when he attended the 75th annual Bengal Bouts Tournament on Notre Dame's campus.

After transferring to Notre Dame from Missouri as a sophomore in 2006, he got involved with the sport and achieved instant success as a champion in 2007 before defending his title as a captain a year later, and then again as a senior in 2009.

But instead of walking away from boxing after earning a degree in finance, Lee signed with Top Rank, Inc. and made his debut in his hometown of Chi-

cago at the UIC Pavilion on May 29.

"It's my life, now," Lee said of going from academia to physical combat. "It's not something on the side. This sport takes a lot out of you mentally and physically. It's something I'm going after really, really hard."

"I want to be world champion. That's my mindset. I'd love to be doing what Manny Pacquiao does; I want to be that kind of fighter. I want to have a title and be recognized worldwide as a great fighter."

Lee doesn't see his refined education as a disadvantage in a sport that features competitors with otherwise limited avenues for financial success. He describes himself as an aggressive fighter who puts everything on the line when the time comes to step into the ring.

"Whenever the lights and cameras are on, I switch. It really is for me a 'do or die' mentality," said Lee. "People are going to see that in my fights. They've seen it thus far, and they're going to continue to see that in my career. When I'm in the ring, I'm never thinking, 'Maybe I'll just stop and do something else.' It's a war for me."

"I'm not going to be fighting in my late 30s or 40s; I'm realistic," he added. "But I don't want to live my life with regrets, so I'm giving this 100 percent. I have this amazing opportunity. I feel like I was meant to do this. I have the skills, and I have the athleticism."

In addition to fighting for pride, Lee continues to use his success as a professional boxer as a platform to bring

attention to causes greater than his own.

The Chicago native recently donated a pair of tickets and a travel package to see his upcoming fight in Texas to the Children's Memorial Hospital as a part of their Champions for Children's program.

In addition, Lee continues to support the Holy Cross Missions in Bangladesh, a cause he first discovered at Notre Dame through the Bengal Bouts. He intends to donate a portion of one of his upcoming purses to the charity.

"Bengal Bouts was such a huge part of my life, and so I want to stay involved," he said. "I got to see where the money was going. It became more of a real thing to me once I was over there, witnessing all of the things that this money was doing from supplying food to supporting education — that's their number one initiative.

"I'm excited for this upcoming Bengal Bouts season to come back to South Bend and show my support again and donate, and use my success right now as a platform to keep pushing for this important cause."

While Lee does all he can to remain supportive of Notre Dame, it's the support from the Irish faithful that serves as a driving force while he works his way through the boxing ranks. The Nov. 13 event will be broadcast by HBO Pay Per View, and fans will be able to catch Lee's fight for free via Internet feed at Top Rank's Web site — www.TopRank.com.

"I just really hope a lot of people hop on the bandwagon and keep watching and keep supporting me," said Lee. "The support [from the Notre Dame community] has been incredible. It's been awesome. I just want to do Notre Dame proud. The school has done a lot for me, and I've been doing a lot back for the school. I think I'm doing that so far."

SERGIO BROWN SIGNS WITH PATRIOTS

Rookie safety Sergio Brown signed with the New England Patriots on Oct. 23 and was active for the first game of his career a day later in New England's 23-20 victory over the San Diego Chargers.

Primarily signed for a special teams role, Brown was called into defensive action when starting safety Patrick Chung went down early in the second quarter with a knee injury.

On the Chargers' final possession, Brown recorded a key tackle on tight end Antonio Gates on third-and-10 from