



# CLUB BOXING STREET



**STILL WINNING:**  
*Despite his unfashionable physique, Ruiz has been successful*  
Ouis Fatah/Top Rank

# 'PEOPLE SAY I'M CHUBBY'

Andy Ruiz tells **Thomas Gerbasi** about why he wants to slim down and make history



WHEN you consider that Jimmie Lee Solomon made a respected name for himself as a Harvard-educated lawyer and a Major League Baseball executive, you can assume that he's a smart guy who picks things up faster than most. So when he began representing professional boxers, the first thing he found out was the most important lesson.

"The difference between baseball and boxing is that in baseball, most of the players are graded on a curve," he said. "In boxing, it's pass-fail."

In short, one wrong move can be the difference between a lucrative championship-level career and a life on the journeyman circuit.

Solomon saw it firsthand with former college football star Quadrine Hill, whose boxing career fizzled out at 4-2. 6ft 7ins heavyweight Skyler Anderson fell by the wayside as well. But when Solomon and his managerial partner Joe Gagliardi were told about a Mexican heavyweight working out at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood, California, they were intrigued.

"We were told about this kid named Andy Ruiz, and we first saw him and he was huge," said Solomon. "But we watched him and his hands were as fast as a welterweight. I just couldn't believe that. And he was very agile for a big guy. His body was no indication of his quickness, and he appeared to have stamina as well. We spoke to the kid, he's soft-spoken, bilingual, he's intelligent and respectful, and we believed that he would really

work hard to get himself into the condition he needed to be in to be a top-flight fighter, so that made us decide to sign him."

As 2014 dawns, 24-year-old Andy Ruiz Jr is 21-0 with 15 knockouts. He's signed to Top Rank. And with speed, power, a commitment to combination punching, and the marketing angle that he could become the first Mexican heavyweight champion, he may just be the next big thing in boxing.

Of course, "big" may be the operative word at this point, because it's the six-foot-two, 257 pounder's weight that has been on the minds of most as Mexicali's Ruiz has soared up the ranks.

"They've been doing that all my life to this day, and that's all they talk about," said Ruiz. "They don't talk about how I fight; all they talk about is my weight."

"The main thing is to keep training hard, and I know a lot of people say I'm chubby and this and that, but I do run and I do train hard, and I can go a lot of rounds. I think if I trim down a

little bit more or just tighten up, I think I'll be a lot stronger and faster and I'll do better."

He's probably right, but the scary part is that even though he doesn't look to be at the optimum level of fitness, his speed and stamina have yet to be issues, and while he kicked off his pro career in 2009 at 297 1/2 pounds, he's been as low as 246 for a March 2013 win over Matthew Greer, with 240 being the immediate goal for the "Destroyer" in 2014.

"I still need to keep working hard," he said. "I'm only 24 years old, and I need to lose a little bit more weight and be at 240. For this fight [against Tor Hammer last

**'If I trim down a little bit more, I'll be stronger and faster'**



One Photo/Tony Stone ©



**PERFECTIONIST:**  
Ruiz is angered by  
Hamer quitting  
against him and  
denying him a KO

## 'I would make history and I'm sure it will also be shocking for all the people who are hating on Andy Ruiz'

"November), I wasn't at the weight I wanted to be at [257 3/4 lbs] and in my other fights it should be better and I'm gonna take care of my body better."

Solomon agrees that getting Ruiz's weight down is key to his success in and out of the ring.

"You've got to think about the kid's health also," he said. "We can't deny the fact that he's not sculpted, so as long as he's carrying what I consider to be baby fat, he needs to work on that and he knows it. We are always encouraging him to look at his conditioning, and a marked indicator of that of course is weight, and we'd like him to be a little lighter. But he's never going to be Charles Atlas."

Or Quadrine Hill.

"Then again, the last six fighters he fought were all built like Quadrine Hill," said Solomon. "And all of them ended up in defeat or sitting on their stool saying 'no mas.'"

The most recent Ruiz victim was the once highly touted Tor Hamer. On the Manny Pacquiao-Brandon Rios undercard in Macao, China, Ruiz had plenty of trouble with Hamer early on, as he ate shot after shot from the New Yorker. By the third round though, Ruiz got into his rhythm and began taking control of the bout. At the end of the third, Hamer quit.

"I was kind of mad because that was my time to shine, my time to show the people who I am," said Ruiz. "But he quit on me. I took his best shots

in the first and second round. That third round I started connecting and I don't know why he quit. He should have took it like a man and went [into] the fourth round at least."

Ruiz sounds legitimately crestfallen when discussing the bout, even though you can't get more emphatic a victory than one in which you force your opponent to quit on his stool.

"A lot of people have told me that, but I think they wanted to see a knockdown," he said. "They want to go 'ohhh'."

Those are the words of a fighter, one who has already built up a substantial fanbase, especially at home, where the idea of a Mexican heavyweight champion has always been an almost unrealistic dream. But as soon as Ruiz started dominating the local amateur scene, even earning a spot on the 2008 Mexican Olympic team (he did not compete in the Beijing Games), he started getting a lot more attention than the Mexican fighters in the lighter weight classes.

"I was way ahead of the other guys when I was in the amateurs in Mexico," he said. "I was beating everyone up and I was the best heavyweight in Mexico, so that was pretty good."

It's only become bigger since, with his hometown fans in Imperial Valley, California, setting up their own viewing party for his bout against Hamer while he was halfway around the world.

"The day of the fight the whole town got together and put up this big projector and hundreds of people came to watch and support me," said Ruiz, who currently holds the NABF and WBO Inter-Continental titles, as well as a number three ranking in the WBO and the number 15 slot in the WBC. That means 2014 should be a big one for the big man from Mexico.

"We'll be in that conversation for those larger fights in 2014 and I think that as the Kiltchikos get older and as we start shaking out some of the chaff, we'll start figuring out who are the right people for us to compete against, and ultimately what's the right time for Andy to raise his hand and say I want to take a shot at the crown," said Solomon.

And if he does become the first Mexican to wear championship gold?

"It will be really nuts," smiles Ruiz. "I would make history and I would do a lot for a lot of people. I'm sure it will also be shocking for all the people who are hating on Andy Ruiz." ■



**CROWD-PLEASER:**  
Entertaining Ruiz  
has amassed  
a big following