

# Exclusive Interview with Karol Itauma

Buzz and excitement surround our former Head Boy, Karol, currently as he continues to progress in his Professional Boxing career. That is certain to only increase after a decisive first round knockout in his second professional fight on Saturday 24th April. Prior to the fight, I had the pleasure of speaking to Karol last week about a range of topics, including his life as a professional; his immense success at amateur level; being signed by legendary promoter, Frank Warren; as well as a brief insight into his life outside of the ring...



JC: 'Is there anybody inside or outside of the world of boxing that has had an impact on you, and your desire to pursue this career?'

KI: 'My parents had a massive influence on my character due to the way I was brought up. I was born in Slovakia to a Slovakian mother and a Nigerian father, so I had quite a strict upbringing. They always encouraged me to try out new things, which eventually led to me trying out boxing and falling in love with the sport.'

I would definitely say that the success of Anthony Joshua had an impact on me, as I initially set out to emulate his success and follow a similar path to him by going to The Olympics before turning pro. It didn't end up going that way, but that was the path that I wanted to emulate and dreamt of when I was still at Greenacre.'

JC: 'How did it feel to you to have the honour of representing Team GB at The Youth Olympics?'

KI: 'It was amazing! I can't find the words to describe that feeling and what a massive honour it was. The journey from starting to boxing in 2014 to going to The Youth Olympics in 2018 was crazy, so I felt extremely grateful and blessed for the opportunity to go to Argentina and represent my country.'

JC: 'You had a lot of success at amateur level and would have been on course to make it to The Olympics; what made you decide to leave amateur boxing behind and go pro?'

KI: 'Everyone encounters different obstacles and I encountered an obstacle at that time that would have made it difficult to stick to that plan without damaging or delaying my chance for greater success. I sat down with my team and we were careful not to rush anything, before eventually coming to the well-calculated decision for me to turn professional and make a head-start in my career, and push towards my dream of being World Champion one day.'

JC: 'There is obviously a massive step up from being an amateur to being a professional- in what ways does it feel different for you now, as a professional?'

KI: 'It's a bigger spectacle and there are definitely more eyes on what I'm doing with the TV side of things. In terms of training, not a lot has changed. I've been training like this since the age of 17, so the training hasn't changed much, it's still the same. The only massive addition is the TV and the Media side of things. Obviously, the gloves are different, the crowd is bigger and I'm doing things on a much bigger stage now, which is why it's so important to keep your eye on the task and not get too wrapped-up in those kinds of things.'

JC: 'Frank Warren is obviously one of the top boxing promoters in the UK; how did he approach you? How did you feel about someone so successful wanting to manage you and sign you to Queensberry Promotions?'

KI: 'I was really grateful for the opportunity to fight on live TV, and have that backing and that support from someone so successful- it's not something that just any Boxer can get, so I'm really grateful and determined to train even harder to reach the next steps that will get me closer to achieving my ultimate goal.'

JC: 'You mentioned that your training has, for the most part, stayed the same for you since becoming professional- are there any ways, aside from media commitments, that your life has changed in this short time?'

KI: 'I feel like this has become my life now- there's a much bigger focus on boxing now compared to before I turned Professional and it's become much more integrated into my day-to-day life.'

JC: 'You were only given ten days' notice in preparation for your first fight; how is this time different now that you've had time for a full training camp?'

KI: 'Initially, I wasn't due to have my first fight until this year, but I got a call on a Tuesday asking if I would be ready to make my debut the following Saturday, and I wasn't going to say no to that opportunity. The most obvious difference is the training; there's a massive difference between having ten days to prepare and having six weeks to prepare, in terms of feeling good physically and mentally prior to a fight. I would definitely hope, by the grace of God, that there would be a clear difference in my performance.'

JC: 'You mentioned previously that you aspire to become World Champion one day, is that the end-goal for you?'

KI: 'For me, the end-goal is to be Undisputed World Champion- that has always been my dream and that's something that I have in the back of my mind at all times.'

JC: 'During your time at Greenacre, you started your own fashion brand. Have you had the time to continue this, and how does it tie-in with your Boxing career?'

KI: 'Things went a bit quiet with that as I attempted to focus purely on my Boxing career, but we've recently started that back up and are in the process of getting materials together, getting things made and putting everything together, so we're hoping for big things with that later this year.'

JC: 'Finally, Karol, do you have any advice for any young boxers aspiring to reach your position?'

KI: ' The best advice I could give is to have a clear vision and understanding of what they hope to get out of Boxing and what they need to do along the way to reach that goal. You're never going to get anywhere without having a clear end-goal and a team of likeminded people around you to support you along the way.'

I'm sure you will agree, it is clear that Karol is extremely determined and motivated to push himself to the top of his profession and one day reach his ultimate goal of becoming Undisputed World Champion. While it is unclear exactly what awaits Karol in his future, it cannot be said that he lacks an understanding of his ambitions and what he needs to do to succeed. Karol truly is a shining example to all of our students here, of what you can achieve if you put in the work along the way.

Congratulations on your second professional victory, Karol and best of luck in the future.

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Written by Jonnie Carroll

Jonnie is currently studying English, Media Studies and PE at PGW. He is a keen and talented writer, with aspirations to pursue a career as a journalist. Jonnie regularly contributes to the secondary school newsletters and has a mental health blog on the PGW website. Moving forwards Jonnie is going to work as a roving reporter across the Skills for Life Trust.