



AFTER INJURY RUINED HIS DREAM OF WINNING A MEDAL AT THE ATHENS OLYMPICS, Sydney featherweight boxer Billy Dib considered quitting the game.

Then he caught the eye of '90s featherweight champion "Prince" Naseem Hamed, who encouraged him to turn pro and who now dubs Dib his heir apparent. With a series of devastating performances, Dib captured the IBO Asia-Pacific championship belt and established himself as a fighter of real talent. After training in America with Mike Tyson and Jeff Fenech, he has signed a deal with Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions.

What does the new fight deal mean for you?

I'm here (in Sydney) because they allow me to live here and go over there (the US) when I have a fight. I have five fights a year, so I'm basically there six out of the 12 months. I've fought in Tampa, Florida, and this next one coming up is on Feb 10, in Las Vegas (against Mexican Jose Gonzalez).

Tell us about that Florida fight.

It was against the tough (American) Phillip Payne. It went the distance; I won every round and got a unanimous decision.

Was it a hard fight?

The opponent was very tough, very strong. I hit him with everything bar the ring post and he just wouldn't go down. He didn't want to get beaten by some 21-year-old.

What weight do you think you'll be fighting at when you're a bit older?

Welterweight. My plan is to capture a featherweight title before I turn 22, then I hope to win super-featherweight, lightweight, welterweight titles. [I want to] keep working up.

Who's your hero?

Prince Naseem Hamed. I'm very close friends with him. He's like an advisor.

Describe your style.

Very flamboyant. At home [I've got] a library of boxing. I've stolen a lot of things from Roy Jones Jr, Naseem, Oscar De La Hoya. I've built my style around fast-moving boxers. My technique is a little bit more defensive than Naz's, however. I won't take risks if I can't get away with them.

How's your chin?

Good. I've never been down. I've taken a few shots and haven't seen the stars yet!

Whose career would you like to emulate?

Oscar De La Hoya. I would rather people love me than hate me. Boxing is showbusiness as well; it's entertainment – although you are seeing two guys trying to kill each other. I fought on a Ricky Hatton undercard and there were 15-20,000 in Sheffield. That was my 10th fight and it was amazing because Naseem released a statement to the press saying that the new Prince was coming, that I'm the heir to the throne, and all that.

No pressure for you, then.

No pressure at all.

What's your biggest purchase since turning pro?

I recently bought a 330 convertible BMW.

Five years' time - where are you?

Possibly... not being greedy, but... three-time world champion. It all depends on what my manager wants me to do, what Golden Boy want, the way they plan my career. At the moment I feel like I'm going really, really well. In five years' time, I'll still be young and still trying to conquer the world. **A**



BILLY "THE KID" DIB
AGE: 21
SPORT: BOXING
THINK: THE AUSSIE "PRINCE" NASEEM
ACHIEVEMENTS: 14 FIGHTS, 14 WINS, NINE KNOCKOUTS

Photograph **RICHARD WEINSTEIN**