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**Akira Okada PANCRASE 316 Pre-Bout Interview**

Heavy hitting Lightweight Pancrase #5 ranked Akira Okada shares his thoughts ahead of his Featherweight debut match against none other than the division champion himself, Isao Kobayashi, on Friday, July 24th, in this official interview.

--How did you feel when you were offered this fight?

"I was due to fight a Brazilian earlier this year, but it got cancelled because of the coronavirus situation. So, when the question of my next match came up, Isao's name was in the mix. All of a sudden, my new opponent is a champion, so I thought I'd just go for it. I thought I have to take this challenge."

--Tell us how you feel coming back to Pancrase after 15 months.

"Because of the recent situation, I've not been able to fight, but I've put in solid preparation, so I'm looking forward to performing in front of everybody."

--How have you been preparing for this fight?

"For this fight I've put a lot of effort into grappling. Isao is strong all round, so he doesn't have any holes in his game. I've been training to bring out my strengths."

--What are you out to show the fans this time?

"The biggest change for me is dropping weight class. I want everyone to see how I move in this [Featherweight] division. I spoke to a few people and made the weight cut once at the end of last year. Cutting to Lightweight wasn't really that hard for me. I'm not that tall, so I was able to cut [to Featherweight] quite quickly. I'm finally making tough weight cuts like everyone else!"

--How do you think Isao is going to approach this fight?

"I've watched Isao's fights a few times. I reckon he thinks that if he does what he always does, he'll win. Probably he won't change his approach and he'll come out as he always does. That's where I have to surprise him."

He's not the type to take things lightly – if he does I'll be lucky! Yeah, if he doesn't take me seriously, it'll be a lucky night for me. But, he's a two-weight-class champion, so I doubt it very much."

--Where do you think Isao's strengths are?

"He doesn't waver. It's difficult to break him down – both his skills and his willpower. He's able to fight out of bad situations and turn things round. His technical aspect is very well balanced."

--How about his weaknesses?

"That I'm going to show in the fight itself."

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--As a two-division champion, do you think his experience will play a part?

“Yes, the difference in experience won’t be negligible. He has the experience of five 5-minute rounds, but this fight is three 5-minute rounds, so I don’t think it’ll make a big difference. Even still, I think he’ll fight as usual.”

--You’re known as a hard puncher. Do you feel that is one of your strong points?

“My boxing is really not that great, but I punch with everything I have \*laughs\*. So, it’ll go well if I can surprise Isao with that.”

--Please give us your thoughts on how you think the fight will play out?

“Isao will be very calm and collected, so it’s going to be all about how I can break his pace.”

--What can the fans expect from you this time at Featherweight?

“I want to show the fans my wild side!”

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