

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2020



### Isao Kobayashi PANCRASE 316 Pre-Bout Interview

Isao Kobayashi, reigning (8th Generation) Featherweight King of Pancrase Champion, reflects on his title defense last year, talks about his training during the “soft lockdown” in Japan, and gives some insight into how his next (non-title) fight against Akira Okada on Friday, July 24th might go down in this official interview.

--Tell us how you felt after your win against Kyle Aguon last year?

“Well, I’d lost to Kyle once before, but now I was the champion and he was the challenger. I looked back on our first match to see why I’d lost. So, it was good I got revenge combined with defending my title.”

--How have you kept your motivation during the “soft lockdown” months?

“Well, it’s not just me – everybody was in the same situation – but I’ve tried to raise my level and bring that to the fight. As always, I’ve had lots of support around me, even under the circumstances. I feel I want to repay those around me, so I want to show them my best and get a good result.”

--How has your training been going for this bout?

“There was a period when I couldn’t train as normal, so I just did what I could by myself. Now the gym has restarted and my training has gradually returned to normal. I haven’t made any big changes, but I’ve boosted my motivation, been studying [Akira], and working hard in training focusing on what needs done.

I’ve been training at my own gym, Never Quit, and Yamamoto Kid’s gym, Krazy Bee. I’ve also been getting Muay Thai instruction at Ant Gym, and strength and conditioning with a personal instructor at PML Gym. I’ve got lot of great people around me.”

--What strengths are you planning to show in this bout?

“I want to show my improvements and that I’m stronger than before, and to give a good performance for the fans. I feel I’ve brought my conditioning to the next level and added new skills. I’ve been more aware in training of working on finishing the fight, so I really want to get the finish. I’ve improved my finishing techniques on the feet and on the ground.”

--How do you think Akira is going to come out?

“I’m not really sure how he’s going to come at me. Basically, he’s got that one-punch KO power along with wrestling skills. He’s powerful and he always looks incredibly thickset. He does tend to swing big, so I have to make sure I don’t get caught and use that chance to go in with my striking.”

--How are you planning to deal with Akira’s power?

“He’s a powerful fighter, and if we both go in hard it’ll wear us down. But, if I can chip away and wear him down, I might find my chance there.”

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--Do you think Akira cutting from his usual Lightweight to this Featherweight match will play a part?

“He’s naturally a big guy, so I’ve no idea how the weight cut will affect him, but I have to go in thinking he’s in top condition.”

--How do you think it’ll play out?

“I have to keep a solid focus on first contact. However it plays out, I’m going to keep focused and do everything I can without breaking until the very end.”

--What can the fans expect from you?

“I’m out to show a sharp new version of myself – a champion different from the rest.”

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