“It is easy to become a professional fighter. But it is hard to be a champion.” I'm reminded of those sagacious words of wisdom spoken by Angelo Dundee, the boxing wizard, every time I watch a prizefight. Yet the same question comes to mind. If becoming a professional fighter is easy, then how does one attempt to become a boxing hero?

Any fighter can learn how to throw a punch, but pleasing a crowd can be a difficult task. Not every boxer in the world is blessed with the fan base of a Ricky Hatton. And unless you are the son of a boxing God like Julio Cesar Chavez, gaining a loyal group of fans from the get-go is a trying chore for most fighters.

To get an edge, popular fighters obtain a swagger like Floyd Mayweather, a hardnosed attitude like Miguel Cotto, or have a unique story like Golden Boy Promotions boxer Ashanti Jordan.

The boxing dream for Ashanti Jordan (7-0, with six kayos; age 31) began by accident. The undefeated heavyweight prospect acquired his fighting abilities on the streets, as a neighborhood slap boxing champion. In slap boxing, two “fighters” tag each other lightly, without the closes fists, and bruises and blood, and emphasis is placed on speed and accuracy.

In Jordan’s hometown of Fairfield, Ca, the best slap boxer was the king of the jungle, at least in a playful sense of the word. “I grew up slap boxing with the older guys.” Jordan said. “It was like a family thing.”

The story of a “Slap Boxing Neighborhood Legend” is rare in the sport. Most up and comers either turned to boxing as a way to vent their frustrations, or were bred to be champions at a young age. Jordan always had boxing roots, he just didn’t expect to be a fighter for a living.

“Boxing is in my blood,” Jordan said. “My grandfather was a fighter but he did not teach me how to fight. My career just ended up starting differently.”

Jordan grew up in Fairfield, CA surrounded by a small close knit group of friends. They enjoyed challenging each other in all sports.

“The people I grew up were like brothers growing up. We would compete like brothers and we would fight like brothers.” Jordan said. “Slap boxing, was just like any other sport for us and it was fun. It was just like playing football, or basketball. In sports, people notice talent when the talent is there. I think slap boxing helped me get into boxing if anything.”

Jordan’s slap boxing story is reminiscent of an unknown musician, waiting to be heard. Musicians are not famous overnight, just like boxers. Yet, with enough determination, and a little bit of luck, talent finds a way to shine through.

There are a good amount of rap musicians that made a name for themselves as neighborhood

singers determined to be stars. The late Notorious BIG famously created a buzz as a youngster in the 1990s by challenging his peers to be the best rapper in his crew. After conquering his Brooklyn neighborhood, Biggy brought his rap game into the professional ranks. He ultimately created a lasting impression with his musical talents that were loud enough for the world to hear.

However it must be pointed out that good rappers, like good fighters, do not grow on trees.

In Fairfield, Jordan might have been a great slap boxer, but it takes more than guts to turn play fighting skills into a professional boxing career. With superior hand speed, Jordan's boxing talents were noticed by one of his friends that knew a boxing trainer in Fairfield, Ca.

After about one year of training in the gym, Jordan began his amateur fighting career in 2002. As an amateur, Jordan built a strong resume including the San Francisco Gold Gloves champion from 2004-2006, the Regional Golden Glove Championship 2005 and 2006, and he was the number two ranked Amateur Heavyweight in the United States as designated by USA Boxing.

In 2007, Jordan turned professional and immediately signed with Golden Boy Promotions. Jordan spoke of the opportunity to rub shoulders with De la Hoya, Hopkins, and Mosley with excitement. "It is a blessing to have one of the biggest promoters in the world, Golden Boy recognize my talents," he said. "I think it is a great opportunity for me and I want to take advantage of it."

Despite his relatively short boxing career, Jordan understands the importance of knowing how to attack an opponent. "My biggest strength in the ring is my boxing ability, I have a strong jab," Jordan said. "It is not a pawing jab. A lot of fighters paw their jab and depend on their power punch. But I put power in my jab, it sets everything up."

The Northern California native's next scheduled fight is on March 7th, on the undercard of the HBO Boxing After Dark show featuring Robert Guerrero, James Kirkland, and Victor Ortiz.

This event is special for Jordan because he will be fighting near his hometown in San Jose, Ca. "This is my second time fighting in San Jose. I have a lot of family and friends, coming to support me," Jordan said. "I am going to have a big cheering section. And I think that it is going to be a good situation."

When asked to leave a parting shot to TSS, Ashanti Jordan stated that he plans to live up to his nickname. "The Boss is the nickname," Jordan said. "People are getting fired from their jobs left and right in the real world. Now it is time for me to start firing people in the ring."

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