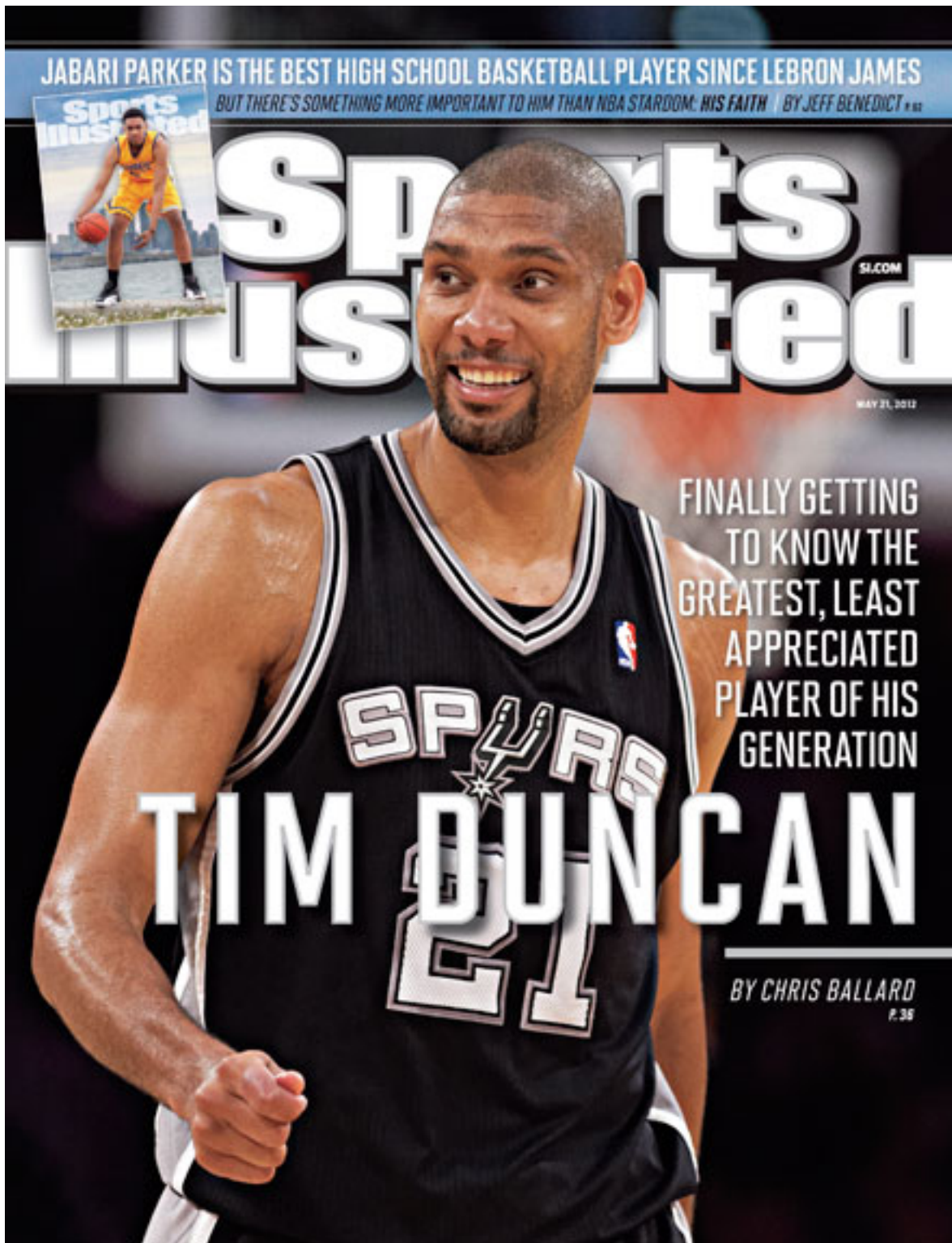


Tim Duncan, 37, Using Boxing to Stay On Top

Written by Kelsey McCarson
Saturday, 08 June 2013 10:28



Ageless wonder Tim Duncan had already won three NBA titles with the San Antonio Spurs when he turned to local San Antonio boxing legend Jesse James Leija for offseason conditioning help.

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“He’s an All Star basketball player,” Leija [told NBA.com’s Ken Rodriguez](#) . “But when we train, he trains as if he wants to be an All Star boxer. If he makes a little mistake, he wants to correct it. I can tell him, ‘Tim, it’s okay. It’s not a big deal.’ But he goes, ‘No, I want to do it right.’ And we keep doing it until he gets it right. His work ethic is incredible.”

Duncan and the Spurs opened the 2013 NBA Finals on the road last night against the reigning champion Miami Heat with a gritty come from behind 92-88 victory. After the win, ESPN basketball analyst Jalen Rose likened it to seeing an old, great boxing champion in his final run at another title.

“To beat the Spurs, you’re going to have to knock them out,” said Rose.

It’s been a phenomenal season for Duncan and his team. The power forward earned his 10th All NBA first-team selection and 14th overall after averaging 17.8 points, 9.9 rebounds and 2.6 blocks per game while leading the Spurs to the second best record in the Western Conference. During the playoffs, he’s been just as good, averaging 17.9 points, 12 rebounds and 2.5 blocks.

The Spurs have reached the NBA finals for the fifth time in franchise history this year, all under the watch of Tim Duncan. The Spurs have won each previous trip: 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2007.

Leija said Duncan was the driving force behind the Spurs’ offseason boxing regiment. Some of the goals of the training, he said, were to help the Spurs enhance their mental focus, improve toughness and build confidence.

It’s no wonder Duncan is leading the charge. Since being drafted number one overall in the 1997 NBA Draft, he’s quietly but consistently proven to be the greatest power forward in NBA history, and it’s his work ethic that sets him apart.

It’s easy to see, then, why Duncan would turn to boxing. After all, the rigors of the sweet science are exactly what have kept legendary master Bernard Hopkins in tiptop form at the ripe old age 48. While no one should compare boxing to basketball, the kind of discipline and intensity Hopkins uses to stay on top of his sport transcends across all sporting endeavors, and Duncan

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is the poster child for it in roundball.

“Tim and I bet how many times I’m going to be able to stab him with my mitts and how many times he’s going to make me miss,” Leija told Rodriguez. “He’s getting harder and harder to hit. We’ve worked on angles, on combinations, on moving his legs with the punches, anything you can think a boxer would do, Tim has done it and perfected it.”

Leija said Duncan even likes to spar, sometimes in the blistering heat of the Texas sun.

“It was maybe 90 degrees and we were in the sun for six rounds, close to 30 minutes, non-stop. Just because Tim wanted to go out there. He didn’t have to do this. He’s already a great player. But he wanted to get better. Tim wanted to work harder. I was like, ‘This guy is amazing. This guy is crazy.’ I know why he’s one of the best NBA players ever.”

It’s no guarantee Duncan will win his fifth NBA championship this season. Miami proved to be the best team during the regular season and has a roster full of stars lead by current MVP LeBron James. But one thing is absolutely clear. Thanks to boxing, Tim Duncan and the Spurs will not go down without a fight.

[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

T DunCAN is da MAN! He doesn't surprise me. He knows all about the art of shooting. He shoot his punches. He shoot the b-ball. He can do shoot it all.

In both sports, he'd stand tall. If he would have hooked up in both sports as a child, heavyweight champion of the world, you would holla at him, yall! And that is my call. You know me. I always call a spade a spade. And I always give an honest grade. Holla!

Carmine Cas says:

Nice piece, it's cool to see boxing transcend into other sports. And personally I'd love to see the Spurs sweep the cry baby flopping Heat

amayseng says:

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Agreed CC.

If Lebrun flops one more time I'm gonna lose my mind.

6'8 270 lbs and flopping like a bitch.

Tim is all about fundamentals and doing it correctly.

I use boxing for training for baseball.

Same fundamentals when a right handed batter takes a swing

as a right handed fighter throws a right hand.

Hips rotation and pivot back foot.

Building that explosion.

Radam G says:

Amayseng, it is shoot "a right hand" in boxing. Throwing is pulling or cocking back then going forward. The first thing you learn in boxing punching is not to pull or cock. You shoot a punch while twisting or turning forward the hips and the shoulder of the punch shot .

High-level boxing is mindset, so you shoot syet -- blast it straight to blank, BLANK! Touching and throwing punches are for bytches, the Big Screen and street punks. Holla!

Radam G says:

Now some scribe should write that Da Manny is using basketball to get and stay in shape for boxing. The shooting of the sports go hand and hand. Go Heat! Those arses it's time to beat. Holla!

amayseng says:

That's what I meant Radam.

Straight shoot.

Or explode through.

I teach a hitch to the older kids.

That hitch is essential for power as u move up.

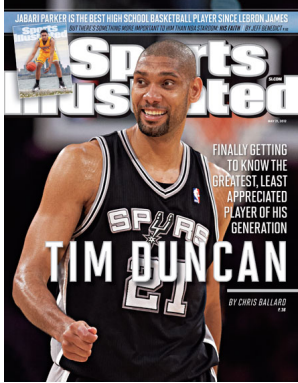
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But still hip rotation and back foot pivot "shoot".

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=Editor Mike;31760][br] /[/br]



[br]/[br]Ageless wonder Tim Duncan had already won three NBA titles with the San Antonio Spurs when he turned to local San Antonio boxing legend Jesse James Leija for offseason conditioning help.

“He’s an All Star basketball player,” Leija

[url=http://www.thesweetscience.com/http://www.nba.com/spurs/features/130603_rodriguez_leija]told NBA.com’s Ken Rodriguez. Since being drafted number one overall in the 1997 NBA Draft, he’s quietly but consistently proven to be the greatest power forward in NBA history, and it’s his work ethic that sets him apart. [/QUOTE]

In my dream, I own the Boston Celtics. I come in to the arena from time to time during the off-season, just to check on our seventeen banners hanging from the rafters. I stare at the Wall of Greatness that features the legendary Celtics: Red Auerbach, Larry Bird, Kevin McHale, Kevin Durant, The Jones Boys, Tommy, Hondo, Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce, DJ, Tim Duncan, Parish, Big Red, Cooz, and of course, the greatest player in NBA history, Bill Russell.

What’s that you say? Kevin Durant and Tim Duncan aren’t Celtics? Hey, this is my dream. These are the only two players I’ve ever rooted for to have success, that aren’t Boston Celtics. They carry themselves with an extreme amount of class. And you never know, there’s still time for Kevin to land in Boston.

Then I wake up and go about my day.

dino da vinci says:

[QUOTE=deepwater;31897]Hey Dino, Bird was the man. I had Dave Debussere and Melchioni as my cyo coaches. They couldn’t even help me I was so bad, so I started boxing.[/QUOTE]

Deep, Once went to the LA Sports Arena to see the Boston Celtics play the LA Clippers. Bird’s having his standard great game. On one possession he comes down the right side and drains a three. Crowd starts chanting, "Bird" and "Three". I may add, although we’re in LA, it’s an absolute sea of green in the stands. Larry comes down the court again amidst all the chanting and drains another three. Now the place is rocking. Next possession, with the chant in full

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bloom, Larry fires a three...it rattles and pops out. I often wondered, if it fell, how long he would have kept it up for. I'm sure I don't have to mention that the Clippers were absolutely horrendous back then.

amayseng says:

Bird is my all time favorite player

with Jordan a close second.

Man those were the best nba days.

It's hard to even watch today.

dino da vinci says:

@amayseng. Very much agree with you. The NBA during that time was special. The NBA does so many things right, which makes you wonder, how in the world did they botch up the playoff format by going to 2-3-2?

It was indeed the deeply insightful Larry Bird who stated, "How in the world do you reward the team with the inferior record to have home court in game five?" Sixth graders where I come knew this was a flawed format.

By the way, the chant was Lar-ry, Lar-ry...not Bird as I stated earlier. Was wondering why it didn't ring true in my head.