“The long and the short of it is that I got into heavier trouble and heavier trouble. I got reunited with my pops when I was like 15 or 16. And he was a criminal. I started running with him and we got arrested together. But we have both been clean ever since.

“My dad is my best friend in the world. This is not a sob story by any means. My dad’s clean. I’m clean. Basically I met my dad and we started doing some crime together. We got arrested. He

went to prison. I went to juvie because I was a juvenile. I got out at 17 and worked on the oil tanks in San Jose just to make a living and stay out of trouble. When he got out, I was 19 and he had already cleaned up for some time. And he helped me set my life straight. And then I got taken to Freddie Roach."

Boxer Zachary Wohlman lives a good life. Based in Los Angeles, getting paid for a sport he loves, and working with arguably the best trainer in the world, it couldn't get much better for a freshly turned professional preparing for the second fight of his career.

Wohlman 23, trains at Wild Card in Los Angeles. He likes to call himself the puppy of the gym shared by the elite, and he learned boxing at a military school based on the border of Texas and Mexico.

"I went to military school and learned how to box when I was 14. They had a boxing gym there. When I got there it was hard because the school was international. It was run by the Marines. You had to be tough. So I lied and said I was a boxer from LA. They said 'great, we have a boxing gym' and called my bluff. They put me in the ring and I had a natural instinct to fight."

Zachary says boxing gave him a sense of purpose, a second chance at life. He learned discipline in military school but back home in the San Fernando Valley of California, trouble was always close.

"I was focused on boxing because I was away from everyone I grew up with. I fell in love with the sport. When I was 14 the internet wasn't everywhere so I'd go to the library and read old boxing books about Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Jersey Joe Walcott, and I fell in love with the sport."

Zachary was sent to military school to straighten up his life. Bad choices, an unstable upbringing, and influences by others held him back. After school, Wohlman lived with his father, who was battling some demons of his own at the time.

"I got in trouble for drugs and crime, things of that nature. When I finished military school, I

never did well with my mom and stepdad. I moved out of there and didn't have a place to live. I hadn't seen my father in a long time. He called me. We reunited. And that was just the lifestyle that he lived. And when we got arrested, he went to prison, and cleaned up. Now he has a successful business. He is my best friend. When he got out prison, I saw what he looked like clean. And I told myself, I don't want to end up like him. I don't want to be 50 years-old smoking meth and doing crime in the Valley. So I cleaned up."

Like a fighter, Zachary switched gears. No longer worrying about the things that slowed him down in life, Zachary tried to find ways to stay positive. He turned to boxing.

"When I was 19, I cleaned up. I loved boxing as a kid. But I kept weaving in and out of trouble. My counselor, who was in charge of me at the time, knew Freddie. He told Freddie 'I've got this kid. He knows how to fight a little bit.' Freddie said, 'Bring him in. I'll take a look.' And it went from there.

Roach was tough with kid they call "Kid Yamaka" because of his Jewish heritage. Roach wanted no mistakes. We hear stories of boxing saving people, providing hope, and a sense of self restraint that can hardly be gained from outside of the ring, not even military school. Wohlman thinks his life is a product of boxing.

"Yeah, boxing saved my life, absolutely. The deal with Freddie was 'no drugs, no crime, and no alcohol. If I hear you mess around in the street you're out.'

Wohlman said he was the only amateur training at the Wild Card when the famed trainer threw him to the wolves. Wohlman sparred with practically everyone that walked into that gym near his weight class, like Amir Khan, Alfredo Angulo, and Paulie Malignaggi, but not Manny Pacquiao.

Malignaggi and the young Wohlman grew a friendship. And before he turned pro, Wohlman turned to the Magic Man for guidance.

"You know it's hard to find help in boxing and Paulie has always been there for me. He came in

the Wild Card, we got set up as sparring partners, and we worked really well together. And I couldn't find the right manager. I got offers from a few but my gut just wouldn't settle with it. Paulie gave me some direction. He told me 'You don't have to go with these people. You have options.' And he was with me when I signed my contract."

With the support of champions, Wohlman signed a management deal with Malignaggi's manager, Anthony Catanzaro of NY, and Steve Bash. Wohlman worked with Freddie Roach for four years before his professional debut on December 1st against Ricardo Malfavon, a four round unanimous decision victory.

Wohlman is excited about the win, he watches it obsessively, but for Roach it is business as usual.

"About my fight Freddie said I had good boxing, good head movement, and good lateral movement. But he doesn't give me too much. And you have seen Freddie coach. He gives you one thing at a time."

"Every amateur fight, my nerves were all over the place. In my pro debut, with Freddie in the corner, I had no nerves. I just felt ready. I just totally enjoyed the experience. Golden Boy treated me great. My management was great. I wanted to wear some ten ounce Grants (gloves) because I was spoiled rotten. And I got to wear the Bernard Hopkins custom-made Grants because those were the only ones that they had. And I took them home with me and I am playing with them in my hands right now, which is awesome."

Now life has come full circle for young "Kid Yamaka." No more bad decisions. "I guess you always know when life is good when you have had it bad," he said. "As far as boxing goes, if you decide to make a living getting punched in your face, something probably went wrong at home."

Wohlman lives a positive life even though he got a late start. "Kid Yamaka" had a realization to change his life before it got any worse. And so far with boxing, he is on the right track. Wohlman's next fight is on January 20th against Tatsuro Irie at the Warner Center Marriott, in Woodland Hills, Ca.

“Yeah, this is my dream. I have been waiting for this for ten years. And there have been some hardships in between there. My next fight is on January 20th and then Golden Boy wants to have me again in February. I had almost 400 people come out to see me last time. And I love the energy.’

Wohlman cares too much about the sport to come off brash. He wants to work for success.

“I want to fight the best fighters there are when I am ready. I am not going to say I want a title shot. I want to be tested like everyone else. And don’t get me wrong, I have watched my pro debut obsessively. There is plenty of room to improve. My job is to learn to get better at boxing. It beats welding on an oil tank any day. I don’t want to come off as some thug because I’m not. I don’t want to disrespect the sport. That is the last thing that I want to do. I love all the people around me. I have a chance to bring something refreshing to boxing. I just need to continue to listen and train. ”

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