Native Americans are often misrepresented as something out of the past rather than a people of a present.

More than any other group perhaps, they are often defined by images and ideals from days gone by—or perhaps more accurately—by cinematic representations of such things which have had a tendency to be overly romanticized by an entertainment-hungry American public.

There is nothing wrong with celebrating the past. Indeed, there are many fascinating things from Native American history worth of celebration.Like many nations who help people this planet, Native Americans have provided rich contributions to the fabric of our society. American Indian governments served as the models for representative democracies, they were the first to raise honeybees and turkeys to produce food, and they made numerous discoveries in the fields of mathematics, medicine and science.

Yet for all their accomplishments, Native Americans have had comparatively few sports heroes. Sure, Jim Thorpe was lauded by his contemporaries.Olympic medalist Abel Kiviat called Thorpe “the greatest athlete to ever live,” but how many other Native American athletes can you name (if you could name Thorpe to begin with) without the help of an Internet search engine?

Now name the boxers. Joe Hipp anyone? Danny Lopez? The list gets much more obscure after that. (Boxing historians might note that while all-time greats Joe Louis and Henry Armstrong claimed Native American heritage as well, they are generally not considered Native American boxers.)

George “Comanche Boy” Tahdooahnippah (pronounced tad-uh-napper) wants to change that. A middleweight prospect from the great plains of Lawton, Oklahoma, Tahdooahnippah represents something Native Americans don’t get too much of—a *bona fide* potential world boxing champion.

And it almost never happened.

Tahdooahnippah didn’t start boxing until he was twenty-three years old.While he always admired the sweet science, he didn’t have the opportunity to participate in amateur boxing growing up because it didn’t exist there at the time. Instead, Tahdooahnippah honed his competitive sprit in other contact sports. He excelled at football, wrestling and eventually kickboxing.

“I’m a competitor, and all of those sports are gladiator sports,” he told me.“You have to battle, you have to train, and you have to work. I’m a competitor.”

Being a competitor is one thing. Being a successful competitor, like Tahdooahnippah, is quite another. As he traveled the road that would lead him to boxing, he won wrestling titles, kickboxing tournaments and even a Toughman Competition. He fell in love with the competition. He fell in love with winning.

“In those sports, anything can happen—you can get knocked out,” he explained as we discussed the similarities between those sports and boxing.“It’s all about competition—who wants it more.”

Despite the success, something must have been missing for the fighter who would one day be known as “Comanche Boy,” because soon after he won his first and only Toughman Competition at light-heavyweight, he decided to dedicate himself to boxing.

“Boxing came natural to me,” he explained. “My grandparents, my uncle, my father—they all came from a heavy boxing background in the Indian boarding schools.”

Tahdooahnippah was influenced by a past that preceded him, but he has made a name for himself by what he does in the present. He’s aggressive and full of vigor when the bell rings. He comes to the ring wanting to prove himself as a fighter and it shows.

“I hit and don’t be hit,” he said when we talked about what he does best inside the ring.“I’m hungry. I go in there and I want it more. I haven’t met anyone in the ring yet that wants it more than me. That’s why I’m undefeated.”

Tahdooahnippah ran his record to 28-0-1 before fighting for the WBC Continental Americas middleweight title against 19-2 Jimmy Holmes.Tahdooahnippah tore his biceps in the very first round throwing a right hook, so he finished his opponent off with his left to earn the KO victory.

Tahdooahnippah was glad to have won the strap, but since his injury required six months of recovery time, he was stripped by the sanctioning body. (Editor Note: One would think the WBC would respect the fact that he was hurt in the fight, and give him some leeway in returning to action. This strikes me as quite unfair.)

Always the one to look at the bright side of things, Tahdooahnippah has remained optimistic about what it might have done for his career.

“Honestly, when my power hand was hurt, I had to start focusing on my other skills. I really picked up on my jab, my defense, and my head movement. The injury was really a blessing in disguise. “

Tahdooahnippah is happy to speak of blessings. He feels his life is already full of them both inside the ring and out, and one gets the impression in talking to him that he’s had an active role in his many successes.

“I’m a father and a husband,” he proudly affirmed.“I work for my Comanche Nation. I’m a representative for them in and out of the ring. I love taking care of my kids. “

Family is important to him. He knows life inside the ring can be short, and he knows that most of life is spent outside of the ring both now and after his boxing career. He seems a man aware of his time and place in the world. He knows who he is and why he’s here.

“My father is full blooded Comanche, and he raised me to be proud of our heritage. There are not many of us. We have to carry our heads up high. I wake up and I‘m a Comanche man. At the end of the day, there aren’t very many of us. We aren’t even a speckle in the world’s population so I try to carry myself in the ring by being the warrior and the provider that we [the Comanche] are.”

More than that, as if it wasn’t enough, he sees a gap in the sports world he hopes he can help fill.

“You look around in the professional sports, and you don’t see any Native Americans. Minus just a few guys, there aren’t any. Whose gonna be the great warrior that will make all Indian people proud? “

Maybe it’s George Tahdooahnippah, I want to say, but I don’t have to because he does it for me.

“That’s what my drive is…I want to show everybody what I can do for my people.”

Tahdooahnippah seems like the kind of guy who already knows words can be hollow. He speaks confidently but with a genuine thoughtfulness. He knows what he’s up against.

“People aren’t looking at an undefeated Oklahoma fighter. I realize that. I realize they aren’t going to put me up on some pedestal and give me big money fight…but I know what I can do, and it’s time to prove it.”

“I put in my work. I put in the building process of winning and learning.It was kind of the Julio Cesar Jr. approach, you know? We took our time because of my limited amateur experience, but at the same time I’m not as young as him.”

Tahdooahnippah is ready for his chance. It’s sink or swim time for the 33-year-old undefeated fighter from the great plains of Oklahoma, and he knows it.

“We’re looking for something good for July or August. If I gotta be the prospect, I’ll be the prospect. If I gotta be the opponent, I’ll be the opponent—so I can chop him.”

Tahdooahnippah isn’t just a boxer. He’s not just a Comanche or just a father or just a son. He’s not just a confident fighter hoping to make a name for himself. He’s not just someone who

wants to represent his people and inspire others. He’s George “Comanche Boy” Tahdooahnippah.

Comment on this article

dino da vinci says:

While I enjoy these types of stories, George has yet to challenge himself. The man has been pro for many years, so it is definitely time. I only mention this because there are approximately 20,000 active male fighters, not counting gym rats and former contenders hoping to make a comeback and every one of them is looking for coverage to bolster their career. It's evident George can punch, and I love the backstory. To his handlers: I recommend going east (NY) or west (LA or LV) soon. He can't improve his position in Oklahoma due to a lack of quality sparring and lack of media exposure. It'll be a sin if this proud man wastes away without the boxing world getting a chance to see him, and at 33, time is not on his side. Truly wishing him the best, but for that to happen, you're going to need to get him out of Oklahoma.

kmcc505 says:

For what is is worth, FightNews is reporting they are seeking a fight with Jermain Taylor.

-Kelsey

deepwater says:

He should come to gleasons gym for sparring. he probably wouldnt last 1 week at gleasons.

brownsugar says:

[B][I]kmcc505,.. just read the story... hope someone gives him a chance. [/I][/B]
[B][/B]
[B][I]George needs to contact ESPN or the producers of Showtime,.. the Next Generation.[/I][/B]
[B][/B]
[B][I]They'll get him a fight but it may not be with a declining Jermain Taylor. [/I][/B]
[B][/B]
[B][I]They get no-name boxers upsetting folks every week on those shows. [/I][/B]

AGreen says:

I've known & worked with George for a long time. During his career he has sought the expertise of other trainers, sparred in other cities and states, done what was necessary when the time came. Expect no less from now on. Look for George to make the most of his opportunities.