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TAMMARA THIBEAULT – SMASHING STEREOTYPES IN WOMEN’S BOXING

Every athlete competing at the Paralympic or Olympic Games takes a unique journey on their way to the top. While talent, great coaching, and years of hard work are elements almost all have in common, the elite athletes who represent our nation at the highest level often need to overcome seemingly impossible barriers to create opportunities for themselves. This is Tammara Thibeault’s story.



World boxing champion and Olympian, Tammara Thibeault, wasn’t always sure where she fit in as a child. Finding her sense of belonging through sport, Tammara is determined to change the face of women’s boxing – fighting stereotypes and misconceptions on her way to the top.

Born in Saint-Georges, Quebec, Tammara grew up in a close-knit family. Her father was a Canadian Football League player and eventually moved their family to Regina, Saskatchewan where they settled for a decade. Although athleticism was in her genes, Tammara was the most unlikely athlete in her family. Drawn to books and libraries, she didn’t instantly take to sports the way her siblings did.

But, at the age of nine, Tammara stepped into the Regina boxing club, the oldest club in the area, and embarked on her boxing journey. Inspired by her father, who took up boxing during the off-season to stay in shape, Tammara witnessed the empowering nature of the sport when she saw him compete.

“Watching my dad compete in the ring looked so powerful. I wanted to be like my dad. When I finally got my chance to try, it just felt like I was at home. I was 12 when women’s boxing was introduced to the Olympic Games and, from that moment on, I knew I wanted to be an Olympic champion.”

Growing up in smaller towns, belonging was a feeling she was often missing. As a biracial child born to a Haitian-Canadian mother and French-Canadian father, Tammara looked different from her peers and was often bullied and made to feel like an outsider at school. But, fueled by her love for education and passion for boxing, Tammara emerged stronger and more resilient.

“I had my share of challenges growing up as a kid. Boxing gave me such a strong sense of self and became a safe space where I could channel all my energy. Suddenly, being an athlete wasn’t something I was becoming, it was something I just was.”

Throughout her journey, Tammara has been supported by her coaches, family, and a close circle of friends. Their unwavering belief in her abilities has been instrumental in her rise to the elite level of the sport.

“The transition from youth to senior level boxing is where you see a lot of drop-off in the sport. It’s not an easy path, but I was fortunate to see a lot of women doing it, and my love for the sport only grew as I began competing at a higher level.”

With her boxing career quickly progressing, representing Canada at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 was a major milestone for Tammara. But it wasn’t the result she wanted.

“In Tokyo, I was one round away from an Olympic medal. And that was one of the hardest moments for me. I remember leaving the ring and thinking ‘that will never happen again’. That moment taught me to trust in myself and trust in my ability.”

That loss drove Tammara to continue improving her skill and athletic ability, which resulted in her winning several competitions and championships. She began to thrive off of uncertainty and those who doubted her ability fuelled her fire.

But what advice would Tammara give her younger self?

“Enjoy the journey because it goes by so fast. When you’re goal-oriented, you might forget to pause and celebrate the wins along the way. Take it all in and appreciate it before it’s over.”

Motivated by her relentless pursuit of personal growth and her desire to elevate women's boxing, Tammara strives to shatter stereotypes and change perceptions of the sport.

“Boxing is more like chess. Yes, it takes power, but it also takes a lot of intelligence, strategy and quick thinking. Every time I step into the ring, I try to defy misconceptions about women’s sport through my honed skills.”

Outside of the ring, Tammara has always been deeply concerned about climate change. Pursuing an Urban Planning degree, she hopes to promote sustainable development and be a part of positive change for the environment.

Now a *Team Toyota* athlete, Tammara continues to train tirelessly in preparation for her biggest comeback yet at the Olympic Games Paris 2024.