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Boxer Rau'shee Warren Heads to Third Olympics; Mike Tyson Hits Broadway

JUNE SIMMS: Welcome to AMERICAN MOSAIC in VOA Special English.

(MUSIC)

I'm June Simms. This week, we recognize some of the music world's biggest stars who are celebrating birthdays.

We also talk with former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson.

But first, we tell about an American boxer who is making final plans to compete at the London Olympics.

Rau'shee Warren

JUNE SIMMS: Rau'shee Warren is set to make history at the London Olympic games. By competing, he will become the first American boxer to be a three-time Olympian. He failed to win medals when he fought at Athens and Beijing. But as we hear from Faith Lapidus, the boxer says this time will be different.

FAITH LAPIDUS: Rau'shee Warren is a winner. He defeated Somjit Jongjohor of Thailand in the flyweight division finals at the World Amateur Boxing Championships in two thousand seven.

Rau'shee Warren was sure he would win a gold medal at the two thousand eight Olympics. But, instead of winning, he lost in the first round to Lee Ok-Sung of South Korea. Thinking he had more points, the American stopped throwing hard punches at the end of the fight. He was heart-broken when the judges said Lee had won. But the loss has made him train harder for the London Games.

RAU'SHEE WARREN: "So my coach kind of been putting me in training that for nine minutes we're fighting three rounds each round, three minutes each round. And he wants me to, you know, no rest and no break (for) nine minutes straight with my opponent, like as far as with my training partner if I'm in the gym, and he want me to, you know, go all out, and no get tired in the ring."

Rau'shee Warren has been in training for almost twenty years. Warren grew up in

Cincinnati, Ohio. He was following in the steps of his three brothers, all amateur boxers, when he fought for the first time at age six. He was much smaller than most fighters and often had to fight larger boys. But by age eight, he won his first amateur or non-professional fight. The American says fighting older and possibly stronger opponents has been good for him.

RAU'SHEE WARREN: "It helped me through a lot because I was learning all the small things as far as stepping with the jab and using the combinations and bobbing, weaving, plus I was watching a lot of people growing up before me that were in the gym like Ricardo Williams. He was a silver medalist at the two thousand Olympics in Sydney."

Warren also watched videos of another American boxer, Pernell Whitaker, a gold medalist at the nineteen eighty-four Olympics. Now, it is on to London where he will probably turn heads because he has dyed part of his hair bright red.

RAU'SHEE WARREN: "I'm just trying to set a trend, just doing something different with my hair and just knowing like if nobody remembers my name, they're going to remember the boy with the red hair."

If he wins a medal, his mother, Paulette, will wear it. She has always been there for him, win or lose. After the loss in Beijing, she helped persuade him to try out for his third Olympics. Rau'shee Warren might compete as a professional boxer after the games.

RAU'SHEE WARREN: "Whatever I decided to do she was with it, and I told her I wanted to go back again because I wanted to get that medal and put it around your neck. Just the fact that the struggle that we've been going through, that right there, just can complete my trophy case. And by giving that to her, I could move on to bigger and better things."

For now, his goal is to win an Olympic medal. And he has a good chance to do it. I'm Faith Lapidus.

Mike Tyson Takes on Broadway

JUNE SIMMS: Former boxing champion Mike Tyson is bringing his one-man show to New York City. The show opened three months ago in Las Vegas, Nevada. It closed in less than a week. Christopher Cruise witnessed one of the performances and spoke with the former champ. He tells us about Mike Tyson's plans to play on Broadway.

CHRISTOPHER CRUISE: Some critics liked the Las Vegas show, but others did not. And the show was not a big hit with the general public. Some seats were

empty. So a lot of people were surprised by the announcement that Mike Tyson had found financial “backers” to bring his show to Broadway. Perhaps the fact that a famous movie director agreed to direct the show helped to influence some investors.

Mike Tyson has lived a very public and, in many ways, tragic and sickening life. In Las Vegas, he promised to tell his “no-holds-barred” story, and he did. The show is called “Undisputed Truth” because, for years, he was the undisputed world heavyweight boxing champion. In fact, he was the youngest undisputed heavyweight champ in boxing history. As to whether everything Mike Tyson says in his show is the truth, let me say it was the truth as he sees it.

Two months ago, I presented a report about the Las Vegas show in the VOA Special English program THIS IS AMERICA. As noted then, much of what the former champ said during his show cannot be broadcast. That is because his language -- like his life -- was often disrespectful, threatening and shocking. But at times it could also be funny and interesting.

The forty-five-year-old American has had huge successes and even bigger failures. He earned - and spent - an estimated four hundred million dollars. People he trusted, he says, stole much of his money or did a poor job protecting it.

Mike Tyson told the crowd he liked trouble, and he “was a horrible kid.” He said he had won many boxing matches by the time he was fourteen, which made him feel, he said “invincible, like God.” But he admitted he had emotional problems. And he said, “I was still an empty guy even though I was the world champion.”

Mike Tyson says he keeps away from violence now. When the audience laughed at that line, he said “I’m trying.”

Spike Lee will be directing the Broadway show. A well-known and successful director of movies, he has never before directed a production on the Great White Way, as Broadway is sometimes known.

At the announcement of the show, Spike Lee said people are “going to hear a great American story.” He said Mike Tyson was showing a lot of courage to step onto a Broadway stage and tell his story.

The show will run for two weeks in late July and August at Broadway’s oldest theatre - the Longacre, in Times Square. Tickets cost between seventy-five and one hundred ninety-nine dollars. For three hundred dollars, people will get a ticket and have a chance to meet Mike Tyson. I’m Christopher Cruise.

Music Birthdays

Several music artists are celebrating birthdays this week.

Ringo Starr will celebrate his seventy-second birthday on Saturday. The former Beatles drummer plans to spend the day in Nashville, Tennessee. He will be performing at Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium. His latest single is a re-recorded version of his song "Wings," which first appeared on his nineteen ninety-seven album "Ringo the 4th."

Ringo says so much has changed since then. He says at that time an album still meant a vinyl record. Here he is with the latest version of "Wings."

(MUSIC)

Also this week, Curtis James Jackson III turns thirty-seven years old. His birthday is Friday. The world-famous rapper turned actor turned clothing designer is best known as 50 Cent. This week, he released his fifth official studio album, called "5 (Murder by Numbers)." Starting today, the album is being offered to the public as a free download. Fifty Cent first gained fame in two thousand three with his album "Get Rich or Die Tryin'." The album sold more than fifteen million copies. It produced two number one hits, including this one called "21 Questions."

(MUSIC)

Pop music star Huey Lewis turned sixty-two on July fifth. He and his San-Francisco based group "The News" were among the world's most popular bands throughout the nineteen eighties. They are perhaps best known for their hit single "The Power of Love" from ninety eighty-five. That song gained worldwide fame after it appeared in the film "Back to the Future." It became the band's first number one hit on Billboard's Hot 100 music chart. It also was nominated for an Academy Award.

(MUSIC)

Rhythm and Blues singer Bill Withers celebrated his seventy-fourth birthday on July Fourth, America's Independence Day. This year marked the fortieth anniversary of the release of his hit song "Lean on Me." It remains one of his most popular songs. It was awarded a Grammy in nineteen eighty-seven. The song officially entered the Grammy Hall of Fame in two thousand five.

(MUSIC)

Pop singers Taylor Dayne and Laura Branigan also are celebrating birthdays this week. So did former rocker Debbie Harry from the band Blondie. And American pop and country singer Michelle Branch turned twenty-nine years old. The singer is just as famous for being half of the singing duo The Wreckers as she is for her solo work.

Her third solo album, "West Coast Time," has been repeatedly delayed. It is now expected to be released later this year. Its first single, "Loud Music," was a Top 20 Hit on the adult-contemporary music chart.