

Peel Bio

WILTON, Charles

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# WILTON'S WHEELCHAIR BOXING JOURNEY SHOWCASED THROUGH CBC DOCUMENTARY

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When filmmaker Jonathan Jude met Charles Wilton of Mississauga back in 2017, he admitted he was skeptical.

Like many people, Jude didn't know anything about wheelchair boxing (otherwise known as adaptive boxing), the sport Wilton became heavily involved in a few years ago. Still, once Jude got to know him more, he knew he had the makings of a pretty powerful story.

"The moment we met, there was a click," said Jude, a Barrie native who moved to Toronto to attend film school at Humber College in 2015. "I think I knew there was a solid story and I stuck with it."

Jude caught wind of Wilton's story through his father, who is friends with Wilton's boxing manager,

Sean Morris. Jude proposed the idea of Dream Boxer, a short documentary detailing Wilton's struggles with securing a fight since it's difficult to find competition and get fights cleared by sanctioning bodies because of the risk of injury.

Wilton has spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. He has also been through a lot of emotional trauma in his life due to abuse he suffered as a child, but he was happy to share his story in the documentary, in hopes of inspiring other people who have faced obstacles in life.

Early in the documentary, which is showcased on CBC Short Docs and CBC Gem, Wilton is seen preparing for what he thought would be his first career fight in England in the winter of 2018. The fight fell through the week before he left, but he still flew to Eng-

land because he was told about an opportunity that he hoped would lead to a fight further down the road.

The opportunity in England turned out to be a demonstration of Wilton hitting a punching bag in the ring. While fans were supportive, Wilton looked back a week later and felt as though he was patronized.

"I don't want people looking down on me," said Wilton, 35. "I'm a real fighter. I deserve to be treated like everybody else."

A few months later, Wilton connected with Jesse Sparkman, a wheelchair boxer and rapper with cerebral palsy from Detroit. They agreed to take each other on in an unsanctioned fight in September. It was filmed as part of the documentary in a dark, undisclosed gym in Detroit with no spectators and less

than 10 people inside, officials and film crew included.

"We had the same idea and we also shared the same mindset (of never giving up)," Wilton said about Sparkman and himself.

Filming the documentary took about two years and Jude appreciated CBC sticking with the project after the fight in England didn't go through as planned.

Jude was also grateful for Sparkman and his friends, whom he called some of the most authentic people he has ever met.

"Their ability to accommodate Charles and invite him in were beautiful," he said. "They treated him like a fighter."

Dream Boxer premiered on CBC Short Docs on May 10. Jude said it has garnered more than 30,000 views reported through Facebook Analytics.



Iain Colpitts/Torstar  
Filmmaker Jonathan Jude (left) directed a short documentary called Dream Boxer about Mississauga's Charles Wilton's aspirations to make a name for himself in the world of wheelchair boxing.