



AS IT IS

A Nigerian Boy Hopes for International Boxing Success

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This is the sound of 15-year-old Nigerian **boxer** Tijani Abdulazeez training.

He hits the target hard, again and again. He uses boxing **gloves** to protect his hands

Known as “TJ,” the boy works out on a dusty piece of land in Alagbado, a neighborhood outside Lagos.

TJ dreams that one day someone will see him box and help him travel to a country where he can grow even more in his sport. He dreams of training in a real sport center and competing against the best young boxers in the world.

“I want to become a professional fighter, like Anthony Joshua, Mike Tyson, Tyson Fury, and I want to represent Nigeria,” TJ said.

His boxing awards already **decorate** his small home.

His father, Abdulfathi Abdulazeez, sells wood. But he also trains TJ and helps him get all the equipment for daily boxing training.

Abdulfathi started the Owonikoko boxing group. He said he hopes boxing success will help the boys he trains feed their families one day.

Until then, the boxing gives the boys structure and keeps them busy and safe.

Sports, he said, prevent them from “becoming a **nuisance.**”

The boys jump, do push-ups and other exercises to get into good condition for boxing.

They practice on rubber ground covers placed in the shape of a boxing ring.

People stop to watch.

In another neighborhood in Lagos, the boys in the club entered a series of fights. The set-up was more professional, with a full-size fight space, ropes and a crowd cheering for the young boxers.

TJ had a good day. He won another award for his family's collection.

Among the crowd at the event was Akeem Kilani, a boxer himself.

"TJ is a talented boxer," he said. "You can tell he is our champion and he will be Nigeria's champion tomorrow.

I'm Dan Friedell.

Nneka Chile wrote this story for Reuters. Dan Friedell adapted it for Learning English. Cathy Weaver was the editor.

Who are the teen athletes in your country who might become world champions one day? Tell us in the Comments Section and [visit our Facebook page](#).

Words in This Story

boxer - *n.* someone who participates in the sport of boxing

gloves - *n.* a very thick, padded covering for the hand that is worn in the sport of boxing

decorate - *v.* to put something around a room to make it look attractive

nuisance - *n.* a person, thing, or situation that is annoying or that causes trouble or problems — usually singular

