



Public Affairs Supervisor Advanced Leader Course, Class 501-17, posing after a physical fitness test.

By SSG Alex R. Ramos

The sport of boxing has had a rich tradition in my family. My father used to box, my uncles and cousins were pugilists, even my grandma laced up the gloves to practice the sport.

My dad, Rafael Ramos, has been inducted into three different Halls of Fame (at the time of this commentary) for his role as a professional boxing referee. He never wanted me to box, and because of that reason, I did not start training until I was 16, which is considered a late

age to start the discipline when compared to elite boxers.

One of my father's friends started teaching me near the end of my junior year of high school. I did my best to impersonate a sponge when I first received my boxing tutelage. I soaked up all of my coach's advice. I practiced every day with conviction. I methodically trained on my footwork stepping forward and stepping backward way before I even started working on any punches.

I then worked on perfecting my jab before moving to combinations. It wasn't long before I started fantasizing about lifting the championship belt and hearing the ring announcer say, "...and the NEW featherweight champion of the world, Alexis...Rafael...Ramos." I could hear the crowd chant my nickname, "Ramito, Ramito, Ramito" in my head.

While I did garner a few accolades in the sport of amateur boxing, I never reached the level I wished to attain. Several years have passed since my last match, and my dream of being a world renowned boxing title holder did not pan out the way I had hoped.



Me after winning the 2009 U.S. Armed Forces Boxing Champion's Featherweight Gold Medal

Now many of you reading this may be wondering why is he even mentioning this story? If he didn't reach the success he wanted to reach then surely he must view his life as a failure. However, this is more about the journey and my pursuit to become the best version of myself. Cue the "Be All You Can Be" music please!

"A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at."-Bruce Lee

What I take away from the above legend's quote is that it's not always about reaching your goal, but also about the process we all undergo while trying to achieve those goals. I didn't have to raise the World Boxing Council belt to realize something that was already inside of me. My effort, my sweat, my determination, and desire to be a champion developed me into

the person I am today.



It was the hard work and dedication that gave me the heart of a champion.

The Great Muhammad Ali once said:

“Champions aren’t made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision.”

Champions are people who are committed to a cause. They embrace the grind. They value the team around them. They adapt to any situation. They overcome adversity and show personal courage. They persevere. Their will to succeed is what drives them past each and every failure.

When looking at the traits of a champion, it is not hard to see the many similarities to the attributes and characteristics of a military leader.

A military leader prepares himself/herself for the journey ahead. A military leader inspires and motivates others to achieve more than they know they are capable of doing. They continuously do self-assessments and adjust as necessary.

In my opinion, the words “leaders and champions” seem to be synonymous with one another in my life. For those reasons, I listed some values and beliefs that I feel have helped me train our great Public Affairs Noncommissioned Officers in my current position as an Advanced Leader Course small group leader at the Cyber Center of Excellence NCO Academy Detachment. I am hopeful that these principles can help you be a better military leader by remembering the acronym “CHAMPION.”

The CHAMPION Philosophy

C. CARE FOR YOUR SOLDIERS/SUBORDINATES

Get to know your subordinates’ likes and dislikes. Know what they want to do in life and within the organization. Try to match their desires with the needs of the organization whenever possible. Show empathy. Counsel, mentor, and guide them. All of these things lay the groundwork for building trust, and the foundation for a successful team.

H. HAVE RESPECT FOR OTHERS

“Treat others as you would like to be treated,” otherwise known as “The Golden Rule.” It is

one of the first lessons we learn as kids, but far too often it seems leaders leave this childhood experience behind as they continue to rise through the ranks of an organization. Respect is about valuing the opinions of others. I believe it is essential for effective communication and building/sustaining relationships.

A. ALWAYS BE A TEAM PLAYER

Being a good teammate is not about continuously dropping what you're doing to help, but being there when you are needed. A team player communicates well with others, they collaborate to accomplish tasks, and sometimes they compromise to achieve the greater good for the organization. Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM).

M. MAKE IT HAPPEN

It is an attitude that no matter what situation is in front of you, you can still accomplish the mission/goal. There are times when a decision needs to be made, and you don't have the luxury to brainstorm. In these instances, a leader has to trust their instinct and take action. There are other times when opportunity is not there and you have to find a way to make it available (taking initiative).

P. PREPARE YOUR SOLDIERS (SUBORDINATES) AND YOURSELF

Plan for the unknown. Confidence comes from preparing beforehand and knowing that you are ready and able to take on any challenge that lays ahead. Whether it's through wargaming, professional development, self-development, team training, or trying to find opportunities for your subordinates to receive the education they need, preparation is key to success.

I. INSPIRE OTHERS

Lead by example and be positive. Trust that your subordinates can get the job done. Try not

to micromanage. Listen to their needs. Whenever possible, praise in public and correct in private. Challenge them to take on new tasks or pursue goals. When they have doubts, tell them they can do it and that you believe in them.

O. OVERCOME ADVERSITY AND ADAPT

There will be plenty of times when the original plans fail, and you still have to find a way to accomplish the task at hand. That's life. Having the ability to overcome adversity and adapt comes from the preparation done beforehand and relying on previous experiences to overcome new circumstances.

N. NEVER SETTLE FOR MEDIOCRITY

I have always believed that if you strive for just meeting the standard, then you are setting yourself up for the possibility of failing. If you continuously aim above the norm, then there is no doubt that you will at least meet the minimum requirements to accomplish any task.

My gloves may be off now, but I'm still a champion. I have no doubt that you can be one too by implementing some or all of these principles. My hope is that I have either given you a different perspective or added more tools to your existing beliefs. I love the topic of leadership and continuously try to improve myself. I welcome feedback, comments, and new ideas. I know I am not where I want to be yet, but I will get there. Little by little.



Alexis R. Ramos is a Sergeant First Class select and public affairs professional who currently serves as a small group leader for the NCO Academy at Fort Meade, Maryland. He was a 2008 Olympic Trials participant (Top eight in the nation), 3x All Army, 3x Armed Forces champion. He earned his undergraduate degree in Organizational Leadership and is finishing up his Master's in Strategic Communication from Texas Tech University. More importantly, he is the father of two beautiful girls. Follow him on Twitter @AlexRamito26

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