

## SMALL BUT MIGHTY: ASPIRING BOXER, 8, AIMS FOR FAME

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Pretty Boy Bam Bam is a professional athlete trapped in an 8-year-old's body.

The kid otherwise known as Wayne Lawrence, Jr., can do 100 push-ups without stopping. He's run a mile in eight minutes. He works out two hours a day, five days a week.

An aspiring boxer with a braided pony tail, he has appeared on *ESPN First Take* and *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*, and a YouTube clip of him throwing punches has drawn more than 2 million hits. He's been interviewed by Ellen DeGeneres and appeared in the music video "Undisputed" with rapper Ludacris.

Oh, and like any phenom looking to make the bigtime, the central-city boy from Toledo is interested in cross-marketing — modeling, singing, acting, reality TV, all of it.

Not bad for a second-grader.

Pretty Boy Bam Bam's father, Wayne "Toe Joe" Lawrence, Sr., couldn't have foreseen all this more than five years ago when his son first picked up a pair of shoes and put them on his hands, then took a jab at the TV, on which he had just seen boxing on a commercial. He suspected he had something special, though.

"When I saw it, I said, 'dang, that looks like a boxer,' " he said.

### VIDEO

[Pretty Boy Bam Bam  
with Ellen DeGeneres](#)

After visiting a gym to look around, Mr. Lawrence starting working with Pretty Boy Bam Bam at home. Later, the boy continued to work out regularly at a couple of local gyms — doing sit-ups, hitting heavy bags — even though fighters cannot register with USA Boxing and have a real bout until they turn 8. The results have impressed people across the globe as they witnessed clips of the pint-sized pugilist hitting, moving around, and ducking with quickness and power.

Darrie Riley, head coach of the Toledo Police Athletic League, has followed Pretty Boy Bam Bam's progress for years and continues to work with him. He said the boy's skills always have come naturally.

"All I can say is he had God-given talent. The things I'm trying to teach grown guys, he's doing automatically," he said. "I see him being very successful. He's a talented kid."

There are some noticeable differences between this bubbly young boy and your typical heavyweight, though. First, the student at Toledo Christian School stands 4 feet tall and weighs only 57 pounds. Then there's his diet.

"I like to eat McDonald's," he said.

And Wendy's. And SpaghettiOs. And most of all, candy.

He loves watching *SpongeBob SquarePants* and playing soccer and basketball. But he knows there's a proper time for everything.

"I got time for learning. I got time for playing. I got time for working out," he said.



Pretty Boy Bam Bam has appeared in the music video 'Undisputed' with the rapper Ludacris.

Mr. Lawrence, a carpenter with little previous experience in boxing, said he's always encouraged his son to focus on training, but the boy remains very self-motivated about pushing himself too.

"Some people look at me and say that's abuse, but then I say all he's got to do is stop," he said.

Still, the family has a lot of hope and money invested in the young man, who was born Sept. 11, 2001, about the time the second tower of the World Trade Center was hit. Pretty Boy Bam Bam's mother, Angela, said the family is living paycheck to paycheck, and Mr. Lawrence said he hopes for better for his son and 11-year-old daughter, Zha'Nique.

"We're trying to fix the future," he said.

Mr. Lawrence said they've spent thousands on various attempts to market the boy, including going to New York City for two months to search for modeling and acting jobs. There's a locally produced documentary called Boxing Adventures with Pretty Boy Bam Bam: Raising a Champ (available through [prettyboybambam.com](http://prettyboybambam.com)), and father and son aim to create a CD of inspirational rap. Already, Pretty Boy Bam Bam has released a song written by his father, "It's Gonna Get Easier," on Amazon.com and iTunes.

At heart, though, the little guy refuses to be limited by any label, whether it be singer, boxer, or even a moniker like Pretty Boy Bam Bam. (Bam Bam comes from the character on The Flintstones; Pretty Boy is borrowed from the nickname of boxer Floyd Mayweather, Jr., whom he met for the Ludacris video.)

Instead, after all the push-ups and boxing workouts, he remains 100 percent a kid, the giggly kind who loves to point out friends in his class photo hanging from the wall and play Wii boxing when he isn't trying the real thing.

"I don't care if I lose," he said, getting ready for another round on the video game. "I just like doing this."

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