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Boxer Mom

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BOXER MOM

Producers: Jack Hildebrand

Logline

A Polynesian Olympic Boxer returns to training camp two months after having a baby.

Synopsis

Tucked inside King's Boxing Gym in East Oakland, 'Aki 'Epenisa throws her gloves on and begins training with her head coach Danilo Jacob Garcia. 'Epenisa, who competed as Tonga's first-ever female Olympic boxer in the 2024 Paris Olympics, is making a comeback to the gym. And this time around, the return looks different.

Two months ago, she gave birth to her baby boy, 'Akape. Now, just a month away from a pivotal qualifying match, she won't be competing for Tonga. She will be competing for a spot on the Samoan National Team. After receiving a rejection letter on her scholarship application from Tonga's Olympic Committee, she made the decision to no longer fight for Tonga. Tonga did not want to support 'Epenisa after they heard about her pregnancy.

However, 'Epenisa has Samoan roots, and if she wins, there will be an opportunity to represent Samoa for future international matches. Additionally, an opportunity to reconnect with family from her past. When 'Epenisa was eight months old, her birth Mom left her and her family, leaving her with a disorganized childhood. 'Epenisa grew up in Tonga until she was eight, when she was adopted and moved to the United States.

Boxer Mom is a story of resilience, perseverance, and reunion as 'Epenisa pursues her quest to qualify for the Samoan National Team.

Boxer Mom

A Film By Jack Hildebrand



Act 1:

Inside King's Boxing Gym in Oakland, Ca, with boxing posters and banners stapled to the wall, 'Aki 'Epenisa breathes heavily as she trains to the beat of the 80's music with her head coach, Danilo Jacob Garcia. Boxers of all ages and backgrounds fill up the gym to get their daily work in, but none have the notoriety that 'Epenisa has. A little over a year ago, 'Epenisa became the first-ever female Tongan boxer to compete in the Olympics. An archival of articles flash across the screen and an image of 'Epenisa holding the Tongan flag at the Olympic ceremony signifies the moment for her.

We learn she is grateful for that opportunity, but is not satisfied. She is now presented with a new challenge.

"I'm not impressed," Epinesa said."I feel like there's a lot more, especially since now I have more time than I did before to develop my skills and get that experience."

Off to the side of the boxing ring, seen laying down in a stroller is her two month old baby, 'Akape. In August, she gave birth to her baby boy and is now working to shed off 30 pounds as she prepares for a qualifying match in December of 2025.

But ‘Epenisa, who was born and raised in Tonga, will not be representing her home country anymore. After hearing about ‘Epenisa’s pregnancy, the King of Tonga decided to not submit her forms to the International Olympic Committee. The King of Tonga did not want to support her since he believes that will divert her attention away from being a mother first.

“I’m just so upset because that’s my country, ” ‘Epenisa said. “My heart was representing Tonga, through and through. But I can’t represent a country that doesn’t want to see me win or give me the resources.”

ACT 2:

For ‘Epenisa though, she understands the importance of being a present mother and believes she can manage the motherhood and boxing lifestyle. For the majority of ‘Epenisa’s life, her Mom was absent. At eight months old, her Mom left her and her family, leaving a gap in her life. Suddenly though, she has started to reconnect with her mother. Her birth mother is Samoan, which allows ‘Epenisa to fight during her December match.

‘Epenisa pushes her stroller towards the gym two weeks before her big match. Beside her stroller, Garcia wraps ‘Epenisa’s hands before they begin their training session.

"Since I have a lot of weight to cut, it gave me more confidence if I came here and trained with Danilo," ‘Epenisa said. "I feel like when I’m here, I don’t have to worry about what’s going on back home with my husband, and just worry about training and the baby."

She is fully committed to boxing and being a mother, as she continues to train as her husband is back home in San Antonio.

Through an orchestral and motivational film score, we see a montage of ‘Epenisa running, hitting the speed bag, and shadow boxing.

One week before leaving for Samoa, ‘Aki ‘Epenisa gently rocks her newborn to sleep. As she settles her baby down for the night, across the room, Garcia is adjusting their training plan for the week. He’s preparing ‘Epenisa for her upcoming bout this December in Samoa — a key step in her journey back into the ring. Her last time boxing in a real match was during the Olympics.

ACT 3:

‘Epenisa and her baby arrive in Samoa — the stage of her long-awaited return to the Pacific Islands.

Growing up in Tonga, ‘Epenisa was raised in poverty. She remembers the holes in her mattress and the dirt floors of her childhood home. Without a mother, she was passed between relatives, always searching for a sense of belonging.

Now, years later, she stands in the heat of Samoa, holding her baby, Akape — the symbol of her new beginning.

Her focus is split between her qualifying match and reuniting with her birth mother. After years of distance, they will be meeting for the second time.

This trip becomes less about boxing and more about reconnecting with her family. As ‘Epenisa continues her fight back to the ring, we learn the real goal. She wants to medal at the 2028 Olympics and being a Mother won’t halt those dreams.

Artistic Approach

The artistic approach to Boxer Mom, will include moments of intimacy and closeness with her baby boy, ‘Akape, and intensity, as she trains and works towards her qualifying fights in Samoa. In between the moments of deep thought and reflection, we will give space to gain a sense of how ‘Aki balances her life as a boxer and a mother.

Thematic Statement

The heart of the film is about ‘Aki’s impressive return to the boxing ring shortly after having a baby. However, the qualifying boxing match becomes less important as we learn about ‘Aki's reunion with her family.

Intended Audience

The film’s anticipated audience includes viewers interested in women’s sports, combat sports, and stories of Polynesian women rising within athletic environments, even when it’s not always supported. It will also appeal to those who enjoy journalistically driven short documentaries that offer insights into a woman's life as mothers and exceptional athletes.

II. Principal Photography Schedule

III. Final Budget

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1							
2	TITLE: Boxer Mom						
3	DATE: April 13, 2026						
4	DIRECTOR(S): Jack Hildebrand						
5							
6	Category	Line Item	No.	Unit	Rate	Budgeted (No. X Rate)	Actual (with receipts)
7	Travel						
8		Airfare(includes two bags)	2	people	\$1,500.00	\$3,000.00	2025/11/15: Jack(\$1244.23)/Koby(\$1296)= \$2540
9	Le Manumea Hotel	Accommodation	2	people	\$142.00	\$1,000.00	2025/11/21: \$928.26 + additional cost=2000
10		Taxi/Uber/Lyft	2	fares	\$50.00	\$300.00	
11		Parking/Gas/Tolls	1	car	\$100.00	\$400.00	
12		Extra Baggage Fees	2	fee	\$100.00	\$500.00	2025/12/18 : 509 x 2= \$1018 + Additional Fee for Cameras on Return Flight(\$121.10)= \$1139.10
13		Drone Permit			\$36.18		
14	Hyundai Compact SUV	Rental Car			\$500	\$749.00	634 + Scratch Insurance(\$21) + Transaction Fee(\$20) +73.82(flat tire and filling gas at airport)=7
15		Travel Subtotal				\$4,940.00	2025/12/18: \$6,415 SPENT(UC BERKELEY JOURNALISM COVERED \$5K).
16	Production						
17		Batteries	2	AA	\$50.00	\$0.00	
18		Tape	1	roll	\$30.00	\$0.00	
19		Public Records	1	fee	\$75.00	0:00	
20							
21		Production Subtotal				\$0.00	
22	Post-Production						
23	Music	Music	1	score	in kind	0	UC Berkeley Journalism Funded
24		Color	1	color	in kind	\$3,500	Applying to Berkeley Film Foundation Grant
25		Sound	1	mix	in kind	0	UC Berkeley Journalism Funded
26		Festival Distribution	TBD				Additional Funding for Festival Distribution(Applying to Berkeley Film Foundation Grant)
27		Post-Production Subtotal				\$3,500.00	This is the sum of all of your categories
28							
29							
30							

IV. Scene List

V. Lookbook

VI. Sources

1. 'Aki 'Epenisa
2. Danilo Jacob Garcia
3. Lesa Faiai
4. 'Elenoa Reupena