

# Pride Fighting champ has WW heritage

## Dan Henderson's grandmother enrolled member of CTUIR

BY THE CUJ

LAS VEGAS - Dan Henderson, who won the Pride Fighting Championship middleweight title in front of 13,180 fans at the Thomas & Mack Center Feb. 24, is curious about his connection to the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Henderson's grandmother, Alice (Bergevin) LeJune, is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes and owns land on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. From all accounts, Henderson is 1/16 Walla Walla Indian.

"I'd like to know more," Henderson said from his home in Temecula, Calif., where he lives with his wife, Alison, and children, Sierra 8 and Reese 6.

Henderson said he's been researching his Indian bloodline for about a year, ever since he learned his grandmother, now 80 and living in LaPlata, Md., owned land on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

"I knew my grandma was born on the Umatilla Reservation but my mother always said we were Nez Perce," he said. "Now I know I'm Walla Walla. It's refreshing to find some of those things out."

Henderson said it's nice to know more about his heritage.

"It's not going to change who I am and it's not something I would have dreaded over for the rest of my life," he said. "I look Indian and I knew I had some, but I didn't know what tribe or exactly how much. It will be good to be able to tell my kids about their heritage."

In a stunningly one-sided bout Feb. 24, Henderson dominated Wanderlei Silva, a nearly 3-1 favorite, and knocked him out at 2:01 of the third round, according to an account of the fight by Kevin Iole in the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Henderson, who also owns the Pride welterweight belt, became the first fighter in Pride history to hold two titles simultaneously.

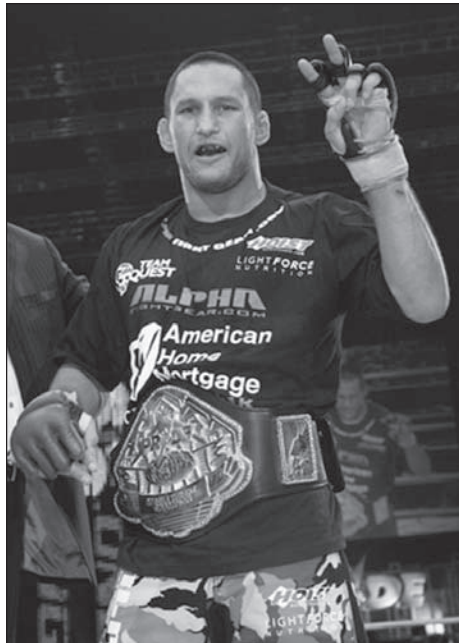
"Indescribable," Henderson told the Review-Journal. "It's an incredible feeling right now."

The first, Iole reported, started slowly and the crowd was booing just a minute into the match.

But it wasn't long before it was roaring as Henderson used his punching power to subdue the hard-hitting Brazilian. By the end of the first round, Silva had a small cut near his right eye and walked on unsteady feet back to his corner at the bell.

Less than 20 seconds into the second, Iole wrote, the crowd began to get a sense of the impending upset.

The fight ended in dramatic fashion in the third. Henderson threw a wide left hook that clipped Silva on the chin



## Dan Henderson

Nickname - Hollywood, Dangerous  
Height - 6-1  
Weight - 199 pounds  
Born - Aug. 24, 1970  
Fighting style - Greco-Roman Wrestling

Mixed Martial Arts Record - 22 wins (10 by knockout, 1 by submission), 5 losses, no draws

Trivia - Henderson appeared in one episode of the TV show King of Queens together with other MMA fighters: Randy Couture, Quinton "Rampage" Jackson, and Frank Triff. One of the gags of the episode capitalized on the fact that Dan has lost his upper front teeth.

At left, Dan Henderson acknowledges the crowd after defeating Wanderlei Silva for the Pride Fighting Championship middleweight title in Las Vegas Feb. 24.

and put him down and out.

"They all talked about my right hand, but I guess I have a hell of a left hook, too," Henderson told the Review-Journal.

Associated with Team Quest, the 36-year-old Henderson has a professional mixed martial arts record of 22-5-0. He is originally from Apple Valley, Calif., and went to Victor Valley High School in Victorville, Calif., where he was a two-time California state placer. He went on to wrestle at Arizona State University, participating in the 1993 NCAA Championships.

Henderson, who started wrestling at the age of 5, competed on the 1992 and 1996 USA Olympic Greco-Roman wrestling teams.

He started training in mixed martial arts in 1997 and now works out with Team Quest, which includes fellow fighters Couture, Matt Lindland, Nate Quarry and Chris Leben from The Ultimate Fighter TV show.

Henderson and Lindland, a silver Olympic medalist, attended the Sportfight event at Wildhorse Resort & Casino in June 2006.

Don Sampson, CTUIR Executive Director who started mixed martial arts at St. Andrews Gym in Mission, has known Henderson for about six years.

Sampson met Henderson when he began training at Straight Blast Gym in Portland. Henderson also joined Randy Coutour and Maurice Smith, both UFC

heavyweight champions, in judging fights Sampson helped organize about seven years ago at the Convention Center in Pendleton.

"Not since Jim Thorpe or Billy Mills or Notah Begay have we had such an accomplished Native American athlete," said Sampson, who attended Henderson's championship fight in Las Vegas. "He is very humble and most of Indian Country doesn't even know who he is or that he is native."

"But Dan is a superstar in mixed martial arts and famous in Pride, especially in Japan. I hope tribes throughout the United States can promote him. He lives right next to the Pechanga Tribe in Temecula, Calif."

Henderson said he's encouraged by clubs like the one at St. Andrews.

"There are small clubs everywhere in the world because it is the fastest growing sport in the world right now," Henderson said. "People are excited about. They're excited about watching it and trying it."

Sampson said Henderson can be a great role model for native youth and he can attract fight fans to Indian casinos.

Until recently, there was no 185 pound division in Pride, and so Henderson fought at 205 pounds and heavyweight for much of his career, where he competed against some of the best, including Silva, Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira and Ricardo Arona. When

Pride began its Bushido shows, bringing in lower weight classes, Henderson fought in and won their first ever 185 pound grand prix, defeating Ryo Chonan and Akihiro Gono by knockout, and then defeating Murilo Bustamante by a close split decision in the finals. At Pride Bushido 10, Henderson defeated Kazuo Misaki by unanimous decision after hurting Misaki with strikes on numerous occasions. Henderson then entered the second ever Pride 185 pound grand prix, where he shockingly lost a rematch, in a fairly close, but well deserved unanimous decision win for Misaki.

Henderson cross-trains in boxing, Muay Thai and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Although he has excellent takedowns, Henderson has often used his wrestling to prevent the takedown, using sprawl and brawl techniques. Although he originally trained as a wrestler, he is considered a superb striker, with an especially powerful right hand.

- Much of the information for this story came from the Las Vegas Review-Journal and from Wikipedia, the free Internet encyclopedia

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