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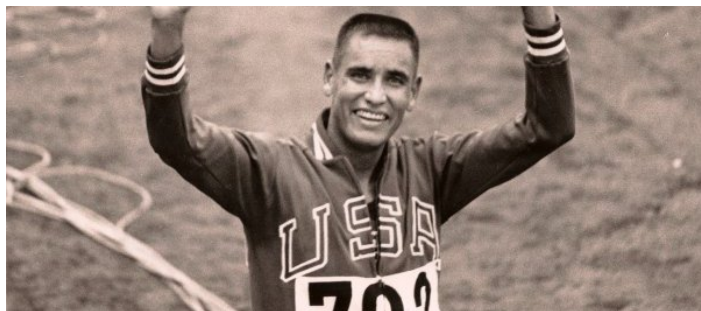
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## Commentary: Billy Mills Still Making an Impact 50 years Later

Posted on October 14, 2014 by NDNSPORTS STAFF in *Other* // 0 Comments



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By Brent Cahwee, NDNSPORTS.COM

Fifty years ago today, Billy Mills sprint to the finish line in the ten-thousand meter run at the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo became one of the most memorable finishes in Olympic history that claimed a gold medal.

Countless stories have been written on Billy's accomplishment and even a movie "Running Brave" was based on Mills life story and his journey to the Olympics.

In the past 50 years, since that historic victory that no other American runner has managed to accomplish to this day, Mills has worked tirelessly to advocate for the needs of many Native American reservations. Something that he continues to do to this day.

One of the biggest and most important impact I think Mr. Mills has had on the Native American communities in the past 50 years is the inspiration he has given to people whether they participate in sports or not. Over the years, Mills has visited countless communities to share his story and provide words of encouragement to young and old alike. If you have ever had the opportunity to listen to him speak you'll have the opportunity to watch his Olympic finish on a grainy black and white film that can still inspire anyone whether they have seen it one time or over a thousand times.

For Native American peoples, what goes into that feeling of excitement and pride in watching that video is also the knowledge of obstacles that are ever present throughout the Native American communities, they are the same obstacles that Billy had to overcome himself as well.

I can tell you as co-founder of ndnsports.com, some of the inspiration behind our website was definitely to highlight the accomplishments that Billy and other Native American athletes have had.



One of those athletes that Mills has inspired over the years in more than one way is Mr. Chance Rush (Hidatsa). Many people across Indian Country are very familiar with Chance as an M.C. or motivational speaker but before Chance became the young leader he is Chance was an outstanding runner from the State of Oklahoma, in fact, he still holds the Oklahoma State record in the mile run with a time of 4:13.89 that he set at the 1994 State Championships.

Chance Rush and Billy Mills I asked Chance about the impact Billy has had on his career and he said, "Billy Mills will go down as the ultimate mentor, role model, and greatest true American distance runner of all time. His mentorship to many tribal leaders is just as big as his 1964 Olympic gold-medal. That day in Tokyo invented the quote, "shock the world today!" As a Native American, I am very grateful that we have a national hero and legend of the Oglala Lakota Nation!"

A more recent runner that Billy has inspired is University of California-Irvine cross country and track runner Isaiah Thompson, who is a member of the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians. In 2013, as a freshman for the UCI Anteaters, Thompson was named the West Coast Conference Freshman of the Year for the NCAA Division I league.

I also asked Isaiah about Billy's impact on his career and he said, "Billy Mills has had an amazing impact in my life and career as a runner and as a person. Through his amazing underdog story in not only the Olympic 10,000m final but also from being a daily positive leader in the Native American community. Billy inspires me to believe that all things are

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possible through hard work and determination. And that you shouldn't let your success be determined by the barriers others create or the circumstances you are in because success starts with the belief in one self."

The words that Billy speaks to the youth will always be something that they will take to heart, the actions of Billy's win on that beautiful day on October 14th, 1964 will be something that will inspire them for a lifetime.



Isaiah Thompson (San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians)



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