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## Queens' 'Ink Master' makes his return to TV

by Christopher Barca, associate editor - June 29, 2017



Richard "Made Rich" Parker, like many children, dreamed of playing in the NFL one day, catching touchdown passes and winning Super Bowl rings.

Fast forward a few decades and millions of people turn on their televisions each week to watch him perform, just not in the profession he had originally planned.

Four years after he first appeared as a contestant on the popular reality show, Parker is again competing on Spike TV's "Ink Master," which sees tattoo artists compete for a \$200,000 grand prize.

The owner of the Think Before You Ink tattoo shop at 167-16 Hillside Ave. in Jamaica, Parker was one of 16 artists to showcase his skills in Season 3 of the show, which aired in 2013, making it through five episodes before being eliminated in the sixth.

This time around in Season 9, Parker came back to the show as its "returning veteran" during June 20's episode.

Whether he will earn the title of ink master this season remains to be seen, but the two-time TV contestant told the Chronicle that he's still surprised tattooing ended up being his profession.

"My peers would've sworn I was going to the NFL. Shoot, for a hot second I thought I was going to the NFL too," Parker said. "Tattooing just stumbled upon me through friends. I was drawing my whole life, but because I was an athlete, no one really knew." An avid drawer, he first realized he had a gift a decade ago while attending prep school, when a friend paid him \$40 to design a tattoo.

That person then paid an artist \$350 to ink the design on his body.

“I wanted in on the action,” Parker said. “I linked up with the guy that did the local tattoo parties. He gave me a tutorial, and my dorm room became my first tattoo shop.”

Once his dreams of gridiron glory fell by the wayside, he established his Jamaica tattoo shop, which quickly gained in popularity.

Come 2013, he attended an open casting call for “Ink Master” in the city, impressing the producers enough to invite him back for a second interview and, eventually, a spot on the show.

Even though he was eliminated in the sixth episode, Parker said being on the show has done wonders for his growing shop, which now features six other artists.

“Before our first episode aired, we had some girls walk in and tell us they saw we were going to be on ‘Ink Master,’ so they figured we had to be a credible shop,” he said. “The platform that this show is building for tattoo artists is like no other.”

But while the title of ink master and the \$200,000 are certainly prizes worth competing for, Parker said his main goal on the show is to set a good example for his son.

“I’m here in this competition to build up my ‘super dad’ resume, give him something to look up to and be his first hero,” he said. “Even if I may be coined a villain on the show, whatever, he’ll love me for it, and that’s all that matters.”

“Ink Master” airs Tuesdays at 10 p.m.

### **‘Ink Master’**

**When: Tuesdays at 10 p.m.**

**Where: Spike TV; [spike.com](http://spike.com).**