

Media Release

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“Boxing – Look Who’s Doing it and loving it!”

Australia has many proud pugilists and enthusiasts who are hitting their boxing gyms with the same rugged pride that Rocky made famous. However, away from the glitz and glamour of the Vegas style fights, sweating it out in oppressive heat and sometimes dubious conditions are real Aussies who have real life stories of courage, mateship and dedication.

Coming from all walks of life, they are coming in droves to experience the outstanding benefits derived from the sport that is boxing. Some are there just to push their body to the limit, others are there to feel the intense rush when tissue and bone connects with leather and others are there to learn how to dance around a ring like Ali. Some again, are there to learn lessons that cannot be taught without getting the hands ‘dirty’ and some are there because they were born to become our champions in this sport.

Australia’s ruggedly proud heritage still embraces the courage and spirit that a hard won battle entails. Today, in The Boxing Shop Gym at Griffith University Nathan Campus, there is a piece of each of these Aussie battlers, princes and princesses of the boxing ring, who are making an impact on the community and those around them.

Take Todd Kidd as an example. Arguably Australia’s finest and most experienced welterweight amateur Boxer who tumbles, spins and shadow boxes with the grace of a panther– right alongside a class of Butterfly Boxers – ladies who are learning mastery of the basics. Todd is in training for his first Olympic Games, having already represented at World Titles and The Commonwealth Games.

Traditionally, Boxing gyms were about mean, hard sweaty males who ignored anyone, in particular any female, who dared to enter their domain. Now, these ladies are welcomed to places like The Boxing Shop with open arms, by people who love the sport and are helping

others to build superior fitness, conditioning, focus and confidence.

Next there is former professional Australian Junior Welterweight Champion, Chris McCullen, who is the glamour boy-next-door type. Underneath a humble and unassuming nature is a tough and fierce competitor who demands the highest from himself and those around him. Having the privilege to train alongside such a genuine Australian champ is rare and enjoyed by those lucky enough to train alongside him.

One young lady recalls that 'on the brink of collapse and perhaps tears during a intense training session, a word of encouragement, a hand on the shoulder, or tips on how to improve is always extended, along with the hand of mateship. That is what I love about this place".

Then there is Eleni Pippas, the 'songbird in gloves' who at the age of 21, has shown how much grit and determination she has to lose more than 50kg and become an athlete. The nightmare and sadness of being an overweight youth is now overshadowed by a confident, attractive young woman and a skilled boxer. Eleni will have her first amateur boxing bout in 2008.

Not the least bit in the shadows is the Head Coach of The Boxing Shop, Gareth Williams, who is the inspiration, drive and passion behind the rapidly growing gym. His Coaching and training skills are highly sought by both boxers and elite sporting teams on the strength of his reputation for being tough, honest and innovative. The fact that he can make you laugh, even when you are hurting, is both a blessing and a curse for those who come to learn from him. Williams says "I can say with absolute confidence that many people are coming to learn, compete or train as a Boxer and are finding so much more. They are finding strong friendships and sense of community that supports their health and wellbeing, and an opportunity to extend themselves beyond what they first thought possible."

Caryn Thomas (35) of Tarragindi, who has been training for 2 years says of Williams "quite simply, he is the best motivator that I have ever known".

Being a great motivator is just the beginning. Boxing to compete is something that must be rigorously and meticulously prepared for by both the athlete and the coach. It is not something that can be left to chance or to an unexperienced and uneducated trainer. In training and preparation, it is vital to prepare both the body and the mind for the task. Boxers are athletes that must stay focussed and must be physically fit to last the rounds. When you are tired, you stop thinking clearly, and that is when it becomes dangerous. A well conditioned body and mind stays focussed and sharp and is likely to respond the way you need it to when the chips are down.

Sport Psychologist and Life Coach, Huia Hikaiti, who is partner in The Boxing Shop says “we have a favourite word and definition here and that is “Resilience”. We understand that inside each person, there is the most amazing and complex ability to heal, regenerate and grow beyond the last known limit. We like our Boxers to put it to the test and we admire those who show resilience and a commitment to improving themselves.”

There are many boxing gyms who loudly proclaim they are the best, most fittest, most equipped. The key to finding the best gym is to find the one that fits you perfectly. If you aren't enjoying what you are doing, or the people around you, perhaps it is time to look for a more welcoming place, where the people are smiling (albeit through a grimace of exertion), where the training is constantly being improved and innovated and where you are encouraged to be the very best that you can be. Maybe you might just love it too.

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