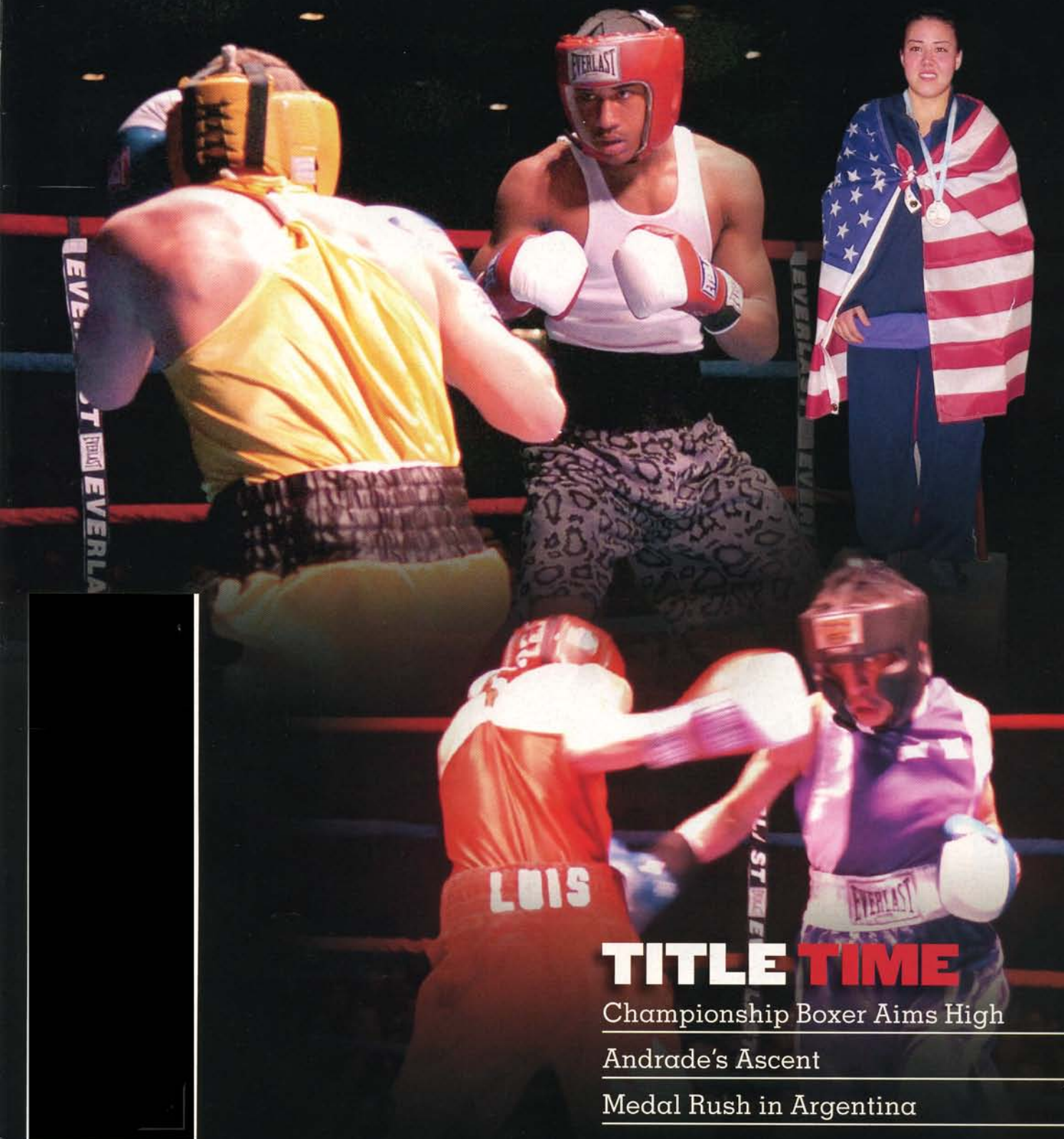


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# BOXING USA



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## TITLE TIME

Championship Boxer Aims High

Andrade's Ascent

Medal Rush in Argentina





# Championship Boxer Aims High

By Alison Moeller

**C**heryl Houlihan is a four-time National Champion. The Massachusetts native won a gold medal at the 2005 Women's Continental Championships and most recently, took first place at the Pan American Championships. With this impressive resume behind her, Houlihan still feels that she will never be able to learn all there is to know about boxing. She keeps boxing though, and still loves it.

It all began when Houlihan was 16 years old. A local boxing trainer came in to her father's sports memorabilia store and told him about a local boxing club at the Attleboro Armory. Houlihan, who had been participating in the Billy Blanks Tae Bo craze, was immediately interested in boxing.

"I wandered down there one day," Houlihan said. "I obviously wasn't very good at first. I was thrown in to the ring a few weeks after I started and beat up by a 16-year-old boy."

Even though she didn't have the qualities of a championship boxer right from the start, she was driven to continue with boxing. Houlihan also played softball and soccer for awhile when she was younger. Ultimately, it was boxing that won out.

"There's more of a challenge in boxing," Houlihan said. "I like that it is the most individual sport. Win or lose, it's always on you and your coaches. You're never dependent on others."



*Houlihan boxes at the U.S. Championships.*

Currently, Houlihan trains at Bishops Boxing with Steve Maze as her coach. She trains six days per week at the gym doing a combination of bag work, abs and jump rope. She also spars twice a week. "I want to try and stay at the top of my game all the time," said Houlihan. "It's easy to get discouraged in this sport. I focus on my main goals and try not to worry about individual bouts."



Those main goals make up the "big picture" for Houlihan. There are always challenges, but Houlihan has plenty of goals to outweigh them. One of her goals was to compete in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. However, female boxers' hopes of having their sport included in the 2008 Olympics have been dashed. Houlihan is eager for women's boxing to be added in time for the 2012 Olympics in London, but no decision has been made on women's boxing for the 2012 Olympics.

Until she has the opportunity to become an Olympian, Houlihan remains determined to box well. She is focusing by taking one tournament at a time. The 2006 Women's Golden Gloves are on her mind for the immediate future. Houlihan expects this year's tournament to have a better turnout than last year when the tournament was held in Chicago. "Last year I won

*continued on page 12*



# Championship Boxer...

continued from page 11

by walkover," said Houlihan. "It was a disappointment, but hopefully, this year I will get at least two fights."

After she finishes her career boxing for the United States, Houlihan says she's thinking about going pro. In the even more distant future, Houlihan would like to become a boxing coach. "I want to give back to boxing like it gave to me," Houlihan said.

Houlihan especially wants to work with young kids and female boxers. She says that young kids today struggle with a great deal of stress and boxing helps them release that stress. "Boxing gives kids an outlet to escape the stress of their lives," said Houlihan. "They have to make so many decisions and deal with rough times at home. Boxing gives them a constant in their lives."

Female boxers are currently facing a "battle in boxing," Houlihan says. Female boxers are still struggling to put their sport in the Olympics and although it is a battle, progress has been made. "I remember in 2003



2005 World Championships team members enjoy off time.

when female boxing was like a joke," said Houlihan. "We've come a long way though. I hope we can maintain this uphill battle and make it in to the 2012 Olympics."

Even though Houlihan has experienced tough situations as a female boxer, she's also had great experiences in the sport. Her favorite trip was to the 2004 Women's Boxing International Invitational Tournament in Taiwan. It was during this trip that Houlihan met Christy Halbert, who would later become Houlihan's coach and a large influence in her life.

Halbert helps to keep Houlihan focused both mentally and physically. "I have a lot of anxiety issues," said Houlihan. "Christy helps me ease that." One of her strategies is to use a "focus binder." In this binder there are several mental exercises that Halbert, a sociologist, uses to help Houlihan calm her nerves. "She's a great person to have in your corner," said Houlihan.

Houlihan says that meeting people like Halbert and traveling are her favorite parts of boxing. "The trip we just took (to Buenos Aires, Argentina) was the best," Houlihan said. "I have lots of good memories."

It's the people in her life that help Houlihan get through the challenges that come along with life as a boxer. Along with her mother and father, Houlihan has three siblings: Jay 25, Jenny 24 and Nina 18. No one else in her family is a boxer, but they give her plenty of encouragement regardless. "They've always been really supportive of me," said Houlihan. "They travel where they can and ask me and talk to me about boxing."

Houlihan's father is a special influence for her. Having always been an avid sports fan, it was her father who facilitated Houlihan's involvement in sports. "He's always been supportive and encouraging of me," said Houlihan. "He's just a great person."

Along with boxing, Houlihan also attends Bristol Community College in Attleboro, Mass. She is studying Liberal Arts and taking core classes right now. Although she doesn't have much spare time, Houlihan likes to participate in other sports such as rock climbing and mountain biking when she can. ★