

Women's Boxing Pioneer is Olympics Bound

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Christy Halbert, Head Coach of Nashville's Boxing Resource Center, has been appointed as an Assistant Coach for Team USA at the 2012 London Olympic Games.

"I got a call from Anthony Bartkowski, USA Boxing Executive Director, and I remember his first word was 'Congratulations,' but the rest of his sentence is hard to recall because I was so moved once I realized what he was telling me."

Halbert has been coaching boxing for almost 20 years, and made a commitment to train and assist women boxers at a time when most other trainers rejected or ignored them. In 2001, she became the first woman to head a team at a World Championships, and a list of other firsts includes being the first woman and first U.S. coach to work as a coach for the International Amateur Boxing Federation's (AIBA) innovative "Road to Dream" program.

Halbert's gym in Nashville, Tennessee, has produced women and men medalists, both nationally and internationally. In her own career as a boxer and coach, Halbert has endured stereotypes and barriers to her participation, both direct and indirect. This was part of her motivation to advocate for women in the sport.

"This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Title IX in the United States, and I am grateful for the opportunities that law opened up for girls and women in school sports. My sports career was shaped by that law, as well as the untold sacrifices and dogged advocacy of so many women and men through the years. But boxing isn't an established school sport, so the changes toward equality for women in boxing have been slower coming in some ways."

2012 marks the first Olympic Games in which women will participate in every sport. "The inclusion of women in Olympic boxing is good for the Olympic movement, the sport of boxing, and for women athletes. I'm proud to be part of the inaugural Games for women boxers. All 36 women boxers deserve to be there, and they collectively represent the thousands of women boxers around the world, past and present."

Coach Halbert is well known for her longstanding advocacy on behalf of women's Olympic boxing, and in 2011 her work was recognized by the United States Olympic Committee when they awarded her the prestigious Olympic Torch Award. Now Halbert becomes one of the first women worldwide to serve on an Olympic coaching staff in the sport of boxing.

"I'm looking forward to working with Head Coach Basheer Abdullah and Technical Advisor Al Mitchell, and of course the other assistant coaches on the team. I know all of us will be doing our best to help the twelve U.S. boxers bring medals back home."

Basheer Abdullah, named Head Coach of Team USA on June 27, is currently establishing the job descriptions for his assistant coaches. "I've been told that I should expect technical assignments like scouting and video review, and working with boxers in practice and competition. I'm ready to contribute my skills and resources in any way I'm needed," says Coach Halbert. "Boxing is an individual sport, but it requires a team to adequately prepare boxers for this kind of competition. Everyone has a role. The boxers have training and sparring partners, and each coach has critical roles, too. This is a Team USA effort."