

Nashville Coach makes headway in International Competition

A United States boxing squad went 19-17 against international competition last week, in the first-ever round robin international series of duals hosted by Oxnard PAL and USA Boxing, November 16-20 in Oxnard, California. The competition included teams from Canada, Spain, Hungary, Poland and the United States.

Nashville elite Olympic-style boxing coach Christy Halbert designed the new tournament model, and brought the two hosts together for the November event. Halbert directs Nashville Boxing Resource Center located in East Nashville. Her innovative tournament design was inspired by the need for US women to gain international experience as they approach the 2012 Olympic Games.

Halbert adamantly believes international experience is a critical component for international success.

"Internationally, the bouts start much faster, and the boxers are very strong and physical. As a coach, I can explain this over and over, but boxers need to experience it for themselves. This event was crucial for their development as international boxers," explained Halbert.

The Oxnard event provided the US boxers with first-hand knowledge and insight into some of the differences in domestic-style and international-style boxing. They collectively faced two world champions, along with the best from four countries.

"Exposure is the goal. Our boxers really need international experience, and with limited financial resources devoted to the US women's program, it was obvious that the answer had to be efficient and effective. When I approached USA Boxing with the idea this year, they were receptive, in part because I had successfully used the model 10 years ago on a smaller scale. I approached Oxnard PAL, in California, because I knew they would be an excellent host, and I knew their leadership would be able to execute the vision for a first-ever event."

For Halbert, gaining international experience now could pay dividends for US boxers in 2012, when women's boxing events will be officially included in the summer Olympic Games, marking 2012 the first Olympics that will have women athletes in every sport.

The last time the United States hosted an international boxing event for women was in 2001, when Halbert was the head coach of the national team that earned four medals, including one gold, at the Women's World Boxing Championships. Halbert hopes her new tournament model will be a successful part of women's program development in the United States.

Designed as a series of "friendly duals," the model may prove helpful for other USA Boxing Olympic-development programs. The format allows boxers to gain international experience in a short amount of time, and Halbert says the boxers like it. "At the end of the Oxnard tournament, I received only positive feedback from boxers. They benefited being exposed to 'multiple styles from multiple opponents,' as one boxer put it. Another commented that it was nice to get to 'compete internationally on home soil.' I'm glad they gave it a try, and am really pleased that it worked so well."

See also, <http://usaboxing.org/news/2010/11/21/the-united-states-alex-love-upsets-polish-world-champion-karolina-michaelczuk-on-the-final-day-of-the-womens-international-dual-series/39609>