

## Local Boxing Coach Named to World Championship Training Camp: Road to Barbados

On August 20, 40 women boxers from around the world will participate in a special camp in preparation for the 2010 AIBA World Championships. This camp is part of the "Road to Barbados" training program, a development initiative funded by AIBA (International Amateur Boxing Association -- the International Federation for Olympic-style boxing), which covers the travel and accommodation expenses for boxers from emerging countries for a three-week training camp and the World Championships. The goal is to assist boxers in developing boxing skills because back home they may have insufficient resources to train at equal levels to other competitors.

Nashvillian Christy Halbert, director and coach of East Nashville's Boxing Resource Center, was recently named Assistant Coach to the Road to Barbados program, marking the first time a woman has been assigned as a coach in the International Federation's prep camp. "I'm honored to be a part of AIBA's innovative program. This is the first training camp they've organized for women boxers, and it will be an important training tool and motivational experience for the boxers. My goal is to contribute to the boxers' success at the Championships." The head coach for Road to Barbados is Nino Fracasso of Italy, which could provide a language barrier for Halbert, and the boxers who will come from a variety of countries. "We may not speak the same languages, or be able to have long conversations, but the coaches and boxers all speak the language of Olympic boxing," said Halbert.

Countries participating in Road to Barbados training camp include: El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Guyana, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Moldova, Grenada, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Lithuania, Slovenia, Georgia, Dominican Republic, Afghanistan, Ghana, among others.

The 2010 AIBA World Championships will be held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from September 9 through September 19. More than 350 boxers from more than 85 nations are expected to take part in this championships for women boxers ages 17-34. This year's edition of the AIBA World Championships takes on particular importance, as it is the first women's World Championships since the IOC announcement last year that women boxers would be included in the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

The Championship will be staged in 10 Weight Categories: 48kg/106lbs, 51kg/112lbs, 54kg/119lbs, 57kg/125lbs, 60kg/132lbs, 64kg/141lbs, 69kg/152lbs, 75kg/165lbs, 81kg/178lbs, +81kg/178lbs+. The bouts will consist of four rounds of two minutes each, with one minute between rounds.

Only three categories will be permitted in the 2012 Olympic Games: 51kg, 60kg, and 75kg, with most of the top competitors at the World Championships expected to flock to the three Olympic weight categories as they prepare for 2012. Halbert explains, "Boxers from every country are migrating to the three Olympic weight categories. At the US Nationals last month, more women entered at 132 pounds (60kg) than men. Given that there are more men that compete in Olympic-style boxing, it shows that the women are doing anything possible to try to fit into one of the Olympic weight categories."

Arriving to Barbados with boxers in each of the ten weight categories are countries such as Canada, China, India, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States.

Three boxers on the U.S. team-- Marlen Esparza (112lbs, Houston, TX), Queen Underwood (132lbs, Seattle, WA), and Tiffanie Hearn (165lbs, Louisville, KY) --won the US Championships this year and have good prospects at the AIBA World Championships. For Halbert, who has coached Team USA in previous international events, the International Federation's appointment may put her in the position of coaching boxers against the U.S. team. "I don't look forward to being in the corner opposite US boxers, but I'm confident that the US team will be in good hands with their coaches. There will be at least seven US boxers with whom I've worked with in international competition, and they are all solid, experienced, competitors."

Coach Halbert has been actively involved in the movement for women boxers to gain entry into the Olympics, and views this event in Barbados as a special opportunity to assist in the development of boxers worldwide.

Reigning AIBA World Champions Katie Taylor of Ireland, Mery Kom of India, and Mary Spencer of Canada, are just a few of the decorated champions scheduled to compete in Bridgetown in September.

<http://www.aiba.org/en-US/womens/Womens2010.aspx>