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KISSING THE CANVAS

AUTHOR // Rachel Cook
CATEGORIES // Feature

At the 2012 London Olympics, women's boxing will be included as an official sport – it was the last male-only competition in the games.

At the 2012 London Olympics, women's boxing will be included as an official sport – it was the last male-only competition in the games. This month, Australian boxer Di Prazak will face super featherweight World Champion Lindsay Garbatt for a shot at the world title.

Women's boxing, a sport that was and is outlawed in many parts of the world, has never been so popular. Rachel Cook spoke to two boxers, Monique Shafter and Dan Vos, about their passion for boxing and how much has changed in this most male dominated of sports. First up, here are a few highlights in the history of women's boxing.

1720s – Women's boxing first appears in Britain. Punching, kicking, scratching and throwing is allowed. It is soon outlawed and will remain that way until 1996.

1876 – The first women's fight is held in New York. Boxers Nell Saunders and Rose Harland fight for the top prize – a butter dish.

1892 – In Australia, boxing classes are offered to women at the Brisbane Gymnasium on Turbot Street.

1904 – The third Olympic Games is held in St Louis and women's boxing was featured as a display event only.

1920s – Women's boxing is popular in Germany.

1940s – The world sees its first female boxing champion, British born Barbara Buttrick.

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OUT & ABOUT

1950s – Phyllis Kugler enters the boxing stage and has over 50 fights with only one loss. In her career she fights Buttrick twice, drawing once and losing once.

1954 – Barbara Buttrick becomes the first female fighter to have a match broadcast on radio.

1957 – Finally, Joann Hagen steps up and beats Buttrick. Hagen was a tall, graceful boxer who went on to be one of the best known boxers of her time.

1970s – After a long hiatus, interest in women's boxing is reignited by a popular female boxer named Cathy 'Cat' Davis . She was the first woman to appear on the cover of *Ring Magazine*. However, it was believed some of her fights were fixed and as a consequence women's boxing as a sport was almost killed.

1975 – The first female boxing judge Eva Shain is granted permission to judge her first professional fight. Two years later, in 1977, Shain was ringside in Madison Square Garden judging her first World Championship bout between Muhammad Ali and Earnie Shavers.

1975 – A 34-year-old woman named Caroline Svendsen decides to become a boxer. She receives the first documented boxing license in the United States in the state of Nevada. She is credited for paving the way for the regeneration of interest in women's boxing.

1978 – After an ongoing lawsuit in the state of New York, three high-profile women boxers, Cathy "Cat" Davis, Jackie Tonawanda, and Marian "Lady Tyger" Trimiar receive their boxing licenses.

1979 – Another pioneer of women's boxing, Shirley "Zebra Girl" Tucker, challenges the State of California to increase the number of rounds women could fight. Finally the regulations are changed to allow women to fight more than four rounds.

1980s – Women's boxing in the USA chugs along nicely, thanks to fighters like Shirley "Zebra Girl" Tucker, Dallas Malloy, Bam Bam Smith, Louise Loo and of course, Cat Davis.

1986 – In Australia, the NSW Wran Government bans women's boxing.

1993 – After long court battles, Boxing USA is finally forced to recognise women's boxing.

1996 – The Amateur Boxing Association of England lifts the 116 year ban on women's boxing.

1999 – Muhammad Ali's daughter, Laila Ali, has her first fight with April Fowler. Ali knocks out her opponent in the first round.

2000 – The Women's International Boxing Association (WIBA) is established. WIBA's current and former champions include Laila Ali, Jackie Frazier-Lyde, Ann Wolfe, Leatitia Robinson, Gina Guidi, Sumya Anani, Kara Ro, Chevelle Hallback, Maribel Zurita, Ria Ramnarine, Emiko Raika, Marcela Acuña, Ada Vélez, Anita Christensen, Melinda Cooper, Jenifer Alcorn, Sharon Anyos, Jeannine Garside, Anissa Zamarron, Gwendolyn O'Neil, Mary Jo Sanders, Duda Yankovich, Melissa Hernández and many others.

2000 – Women's boxing is legalised in Queensland.

2001 – On June 8, Laila Ali goes up against Jackie Frazier-Lyde (Joe Frazier's daughter). The fight is nicknamed Ali/Frazier IV in allusion to their fathers' famous fight trilogy. Ali wins by judges' decision.

2001 – Misha Merz, Australia's golden girl of boxing, wins the Australian National Championship.

2008 – The ban on women's boxing is finally lifted in New South Wales.

2009 – Misha Merz wins the Master's Division at the 2009 National Women's Golden

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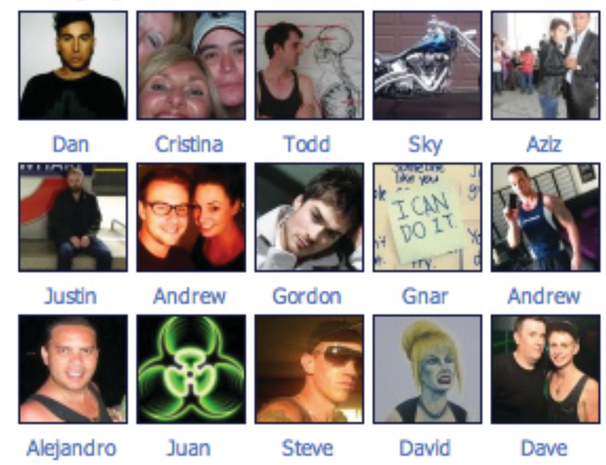

2009 – Misha Merz wins the Master's Division at the 2009 National Women's Golden Gloves.

2009 – On August 14, the International Olympic Committee's Executive Board approves the inclusion of women's boxing for the Games in London in the 2012.

2009 – Women boxers in Afghanistan begin training for the 2012 Olympic Games. Shahla Sekandari wins a lightweight bronze medal at the Asian indoor games in Vietnam. She is Afghanistan's best hope at winning an Olympic medal.

2011 – As of January, Western Australian middleweight, Naomi Fischer-Rasmussen, is No. 1 in the world and seven Australian women are ranked in the top 10 in the world. Not one Australian male has a top 10 ranking.

2011 – In February, Susie "Q" Ramadan (aka Lady Sensation) a Melbourne Muslim boxer wins the first female International Boxing Federation bantamweight championship.

2011 – On September 23, 'Dirty' Di Prazak, Australia's featherweight champion, will fight Canadian Lindsay Garbatt for the world title.

2012 London Olympics Games – Women boxers will compete in three weight classes, with 12 competitors each in flyweight, lightweight and middleweight.

TAGS: Boxing, Sport, Women's Sport

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Cook

Rachel Cook has worked in both the queer and mainstream media for over a decade. She wrote the syndicated column, 'Who's Afraid of Cheeky Biscuit', and has written numerous articles and features for the queer press. She has also written for *The Age* and the ABC. Before becoming editor of *Melbourne Community Voice*, she was a producer for ABC radio. Between 2008 and 2012, Rachel was the editor of *CHERRIE*. In 2010 her book, *A History of Queer Australia*, was published and is currently in use in high schools across Australia.

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