



#Thirty30WST

30 day challenge helping to create a level playing for Women's Sport

WOMEN'S BOXING AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL – COMMITTED TO CLOSING THE GAP

Grassroots boxing fully reliant on family of committed athletes, volunteers and local fund-raising activity

To gain a sense of the Women's Boxing grassroots activity feeding the pipeline of future National and International champions, we visited Banbury Boxing Club to meet their committed group of athletes and coaches.

Banbury is certainly a far cry from the National HQ and purpose-built training facility at the English Institute of Sport Sheffield, and an even greater distance from Rio. Our visit highlights that the gap that exists is not purely geographical, but also financial and in how they are resourced.

The British Amateur Boxing Association manages the World Class Performance Programme for the GB Boxing team that competes at the Olympic Games, primarily funded through a UK Sport grant of £13.7 million. At the heart of the Women's Squad is Olympic Champion Nicola Adams whose profile has soared since winning gold in London, including being crowned 'Sporting Role Model' at the [Women's Sport Trust Awards](#) in May 2015.

The [Banbury Boxing Club](#) is 3 years old, affiliated with England Boxing and describe themselves as a 'not for profit' charitable club run by volunteers and supported by donations, small grants and member subscriptions.

Their current location is a welcoming, functional training venue (with good equipment, hard-wearing flooring and 2 boxing rings) for around 100 members with an age range between 8 and 65. The truth is that volunteers cleared, cleaned and equipped the space in their spare time to be able to offer affordable boxing classes in a safe environment for competitive boxers to train and compete – one day to represent the Home Counties, England or even Team GB!



The coaches are all volunteers, running classes for beginners as well as Development and Boxing Squads. These same coaches also spend time running the Club, applying for much-needed grants, and creating fund-raisers to enable the Club to survive so that athletes such as Sammy, Laura, Louise, Megan and Magdalena can improve fitness, skills and techniques, as well as find benefits in confidence levels and focus.



'Committed' was the word we heard most often. Coaches *committed* to the club. Athletes fully *committed* to train and learn. Mutually *committed* to each other, irrespective of gender, and to their desire to be the best they can be. Also sharing with us how commitment to the disciplines of boxing has helped many of them to build confidence, handle adversity and be themselves.

It's awesome seeing the athletes perform and the coaches positively encouraging each and every one present. As coach Mark Cooper puts it – "the pay-off becomes the joy in seeing someone performing at a level way above where they were when they joined us and the confidence that it brings to them when they do what they thought they couldn't."

So whilst the funding at GB level is commendable, it's worth highlighting the gap that exists. For example, Sport England help fund Club Support Officers via England Boxing. In reality the CSO covering Banbury is spread thinly across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. So, it's unsurprising that much is left to the local volunteers to create, market and maintain the club.

In addition, if there was an easier process for grants, or more resource available to aid grant completion, that would help, as would a consistent approach by Councils to reduce charges where there is flexibility to at a local level.

And, just to note, it would help promote Women's Boxing if the Olympic Organisation introduced additional weight categories than the 3 that currently exist. For comparison, there are 10 categories in Men's Boxing.

Everyone involved in Banbury Boxing Club, and many grassroots clubs like it, are doing a superb job to maintain momentum, and GB Team success will continue to grab the headlines. What's needed now is the financial and resourcing gap to be narrowed, to enable clubs to switch their mode from 'survive' to 'thrive'.

With thanks to all at Banbury Boxing Club, especially Mark Cooper for his time and insight on the night.

Julie & Tim Cozze-Young

Note: we're raising personal sponsorship for the Women's Sport Trust at www.justgiving.com/cozzeyoung

Profiles:

Julie and Tim Cozze-Young live in North Oxfordshire, have over 20 years' experience in business, and both share a lifetime love of sport.

Tim is a member of the Women's Sport Trust Board of Trustees and Funding Development Board.

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