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As boxing reality show *White Coll Stylist* talks to two of last year's changed their lives – and why they

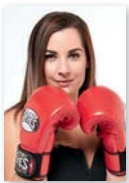
WORDS: HANNAH BASS

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ar *DXB* starts its search for new contestants, competitors about how learning to box has believe more women should take up the sport

PHOTOGRAPHY: AUSRA OSIPAVICIUTE





ANGELIQUE TURNER

FIGHT NAME:
TOO SHARP
DAY JOB: HAIR AND
MAKE-UP ARTIST

"I was looking for a challenge, to do something I'd never done before. I suffer from anxiety, I'm terrified of cameras, terrified of having people watching me, so I thought it would be the best way to overcome all my fears. To fight someone under the spotlight in front of everyone I care about is the biggest possible thing that I could have done. And it sounds cheesy but it's changed my whole life.

The physical side is relentless but it's also an emotional journey and it surprised me how much I went through mentally. The strange thing about boxing is that it shows you exactly who you are and what you're capable of. Because of my anxiety, even just turning up for training could be overwhelming, and getting into the ring was more than I could have hoped for – there were plenty of moments when I didn't think I could go through with the fight. But weirdly, on the day of the fight, I was totally calm. My coaches had told me that I'd go into this zone and I'd never believed it because I always used to be so nervous. But I was there: I knew I'd done everything I could to prepare for the fight and, when the time came, I was so ready to go – I didn't want to wait anymore.

People still have misconceptions about women boxing. My own dad was furious with me for doing the show and to this day he doesn't want to discuss it. He thinks it isn't a sport for feminine women but all the girls I fight with in my gym now, they're feminine, and honestly, I think they're the toughest people in the gym.

It's an amazing sport for women. You learn to use all your physical attributes and to appreciate things that you didn't like about your body before. I've always been taller and had a stronger build than most girls I know. In a sport like this, that's a huge advantage rather than something you want to change. More women should get involved in boxing because it makes you realise what your body is capable of.

And it's definitely empowering. Before I started boxing I was always second-guessing myself and preferred to stay in the background. Now I take every single opportunity that I'm given and I'm focused on doing the best for me, whether in my personal life or my career. I know now that I'm capable of a lot and that feeling anxious should never stop me from approaching something. I've fought someone on TV – nothing feels scary after that.

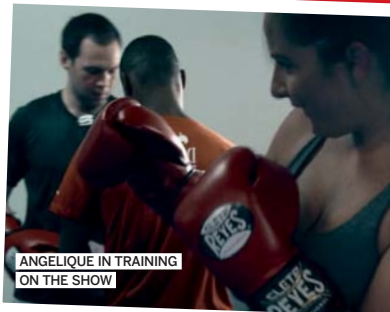
I'd tell potential contestants to go for it and don't let anything stop you. If a makeup artist with anxiety can do it, you can do it, it's pretty badass, to be honest."

SAVED BY THE BELL

Wondering what White Collar DXB is all about? We've got the one-two

WHAT IS WHITE COLLAR BOXING?

Exactly what it sounds like. The tradition started in Wall Street in the late 1980s when bankers who'd been training in amateur boxing gyms decided they'd like to try their hand at trading punches as well as stocks and shares. The idea of white collar professionals (rather than pro boxers) fighting for spectators soon spread to other global financial centres. Bouts usually follow the format of three two-minute rounds.



SO WHAT'S WHITE COLLAR DXB ABOUT?

Aired in the autumn of 2015 on OSN Sports, season one saw two teams of Dubai-based white collar workers learn to box for the first time. Eight weeks of intensive training, sparring and team challenges, plus the threat of a reserve team fighting to take their places, culminated in a final fight night to crown one team the champions.

GOT IT. HOW DO I GET ON SEASON TWO?

Reckon you've got what it takes? Let the team know why you want to fight by leaving a comment on [facebook.com/WhiteCollarDXB](https://www.facebook.com/WhiteCollarDXB) or tagging @WhiteCollarDXB in a shot on Instagram.



NADINE DU TOIT

FIGHT NAME:
GLORY GIRL
DAY JOB: FITNESS
AND LIFE COACH

"Two years ago I decided to start living for adventure and taking opportunities. When the opportunity to take part in *White Collar DXB* came up, I knew it could be an epic adventure.

Boxing is like no sport I've ever done before. Physically, it's incredibly intense – even though I was fit, the training was a massive shock to my body, and I basically couldn't breathe through my nose for three months after getting hit in the face so many times.

But it's not just intense on your body – it's your mind and your emotions, too. When else would you go to face an opponent knowing that you could possibly even die? And do it willingly, knowing you're going to give as much damage as you take. There's something very primal and animalistic about it. In fact, it's the scariest thing I've ever done in my life. All the sports I've done before, like cycling or netball or rugby, you can kind of hide in a group, but boxing is so exposing. It's you and her in the ring, and that's it, and you have to be able to give and take pain at the same time.

Every time I stepped into the ring I had to win a battle with self-doubt. You wonder what the other girl knows about your weaknesses, what's she going to bring. That fear made me feel like I couldn't move at times, but you have to talk yourself out of it. To be honest, I also struggled to make peace with the idea of boxing as a sport. It made me feel like a bully and I'd always wait for the other girl to hit me first, as if I needed her to give me permission. But once I got started the athlete in me came out and I knew I wouldn't give up – I was like a dog with a bone. It's hard to imagine the feeling of being in a fight now but it's almost like an out-of-body experience. Everything goes silent, like you're in a black hole. You know this is your purpose, the focus of all you've been training for.

I grew up watching Jean-Claude Van Damme in martial arts movies like *Bloodsport* and throughout the challenge I always had this question in my heart: 'Can I really do that?' And this journey answered that question for me: yes, if I apply myself, I can do anything.

That's what's so empowering about boxing, particularly as a woman. You don't wonder anymore if you're strong enough to handle yourself – you just know it, you've had it proved to you. That gives you confidence.

If you're thinking about getting involved, you have to know it will be out of your comfort zone on all levels. There'll be sweat, pain and tears, and you will be punched on the nose – but remember, the other person is going to get that too. So if there's even a little spark in your heart that you want to do this, go for it."

