



# No Pain, No Gain

What does it take to get ready for an amateur boxing competition within the span of eight weeks, while maintaining a full-time day job? We talked to the head trainers behind *Fighting Fit DXB* to find out.

If you thought that boxing was all about throwing punches and just having strong arms (and maybe a strong jaw), well, there's your first mistake. While the two certainly would help, fighting in a boxing match takes a unique combination of strength, speed and stamina, to ensure that you can not only deliver strong and swift punches, but also stay light on your feet while not getting too winded as you get through round after round. It's for this very reason that boxing is such an excellent full body workout, now popular with many a model and celebrity alike, including a number Victoria's Secret models who proudly champion the sport. Thus is the basis for reality TV show *Fighting Fit DXB*, which is based on an amateur boxing competition that takes regular, white collar workers and, over the course of eight or so weeks, prepares them for a grand finale of their final fight night, while also transforming their lives and fitness levels in the process.

While the show is, chiefly, about boxing, the training doesn't involve just training for the sport day in and day out. During each week, the contestants are taught technique and form during boxing sessions and several sparring practices. In addition, they're put through a number of gruelling workouts to help improve their strength and conditioning through sessions created by the judges, as well as a range of workouts from the experts at Warehouse Gym, where the show's training is primarily based.

## Harder, Faster, Stronger, Better

"With boxing, as with all exercise, it is important to ensure balance," says the show's head strength coach and founder of Strength PT Studio, Chris Miller. "Boxing requires a lot of forward punching movements as well as a hunched chest and raised shoulders where the boxer defends his or her face and chin," Chris explains, continuing: "Without exercises to counter this, the chest muscles become more constricted, exacerbating the issues that many people face today already. It is also important to remember that how fast you throw a punch is determined as much by the ability to accelerate the arm as it is by the ability to decelerate it. Therefore, developing strong antagonist muscles will help the boxer throw faster punches with more power." As Chris explains, the contestants' training regime is designed to help them build a strong foundation in terms of physical fitness, address any muscular imbalances, and then, once they've got their bases covered, building pound-for-pound strength. "Too often these days, people spend most of their time in a seated position, often with their shoulders hunched forward whether that's in the car, at their desk or while watching TV. Our bodies are not designed to be in this position for this long, day in and day out. It causes our chest muscles to tighten and restrict breathing; our glutes "switch off" and then don't "fire" properly when required; our hamstrings and hip flexors get tight, causing pelvic tilt and restricted

mobility; our core abdominal muscles become weak; our lower back muscles “take over” the job of the glutes and core muscles, resulting in chronic back pain, and so on,” Chris says. As such, he’s designed a regime that works initially on unilateral work—“So, one limb at a time, to make each side of the athlete as strong as the other, or as close as possible, to help develop better proprioception or control of the limb, improved core strength, and reduce risk of injury by ironing out any imbalances”—as well as training the major antagonist muscles, such as the upper back, to ensure that the athletes are strong enough to decelerate the punches they throw, “and therefore strong enough to throw faster, harder punches.” Chris is also focusing on developing the rotator cuff muscles of the shoulders to try and minimise overuse injuries that they’ve seen in the past. “After that initial phase, we’ll start to develop pound-for-pound strength, which means making them stronger, not bigger, so that again, they can produce more power with each punch, whilst still keeping an emphasis on some unilateral work, especially in the lower body as this better simulates the movements used in boxing than more traditional lower-body exercises such as squats and deadlifts,” Chris says. “The important thing for me, whether I’m training contestants in *Fighting Fit DXB* or a client at my PT studio is to get the basics right and build a strong foundation first, balance the body and strengthen those areas that are already ‘weaker’ because of day to day life. Once you have a strong foundation, you can build whatever you want. If you load a weak foundation, then sooner or later it will all come tumbling down,” he adds. If you get it right, Chris insists that the result is fat loss, increased energy levels, increased libido,



*This page: Judges Eva Clarke, Chris Miller and Roy Gumbs on the Panel. Previous page: Boxing Coach Mark Kiernan working with the contestants.*

decreased risk of chronic disease, and hopefully, an increased desire to make your whole life healthier.

### Staying Fit For Life

Eva Clarke, head endurance coach, agrees that it’s important to keep your bases strong, particularly when the contestants come from a variety of starting fitness levels: “I use my HUA training methods, which combine cardio conditioning, explosive movements, body weight exercises, compound movements, and isolated exercises. I ramp up my methods of training with my military persona and boot camp style classes. We have such a broad range of fitness levels within the show; most contestants have come from a sedentary lifestyle and these are the ones who are finding it hard to get up the next day and return to training. Then,

## “Boxing teaches you to think on your feet and keep planning, even when you’re tired”

we also have another group within the contestants that are in better shape than most PT’s in the UAE. The already-conditioned contestants are adapting well to the training programme and their recovery is faster, therefore they can train more consistently and at a higher intensity each day. My role is to push each individual to their respective limits, whether they can do 100 push-ups or if they can barely do one,” Eva explains. “My responsibility is to find each individual’s limits without mentally and physically breaking them. It’s hard trying to turn regular Joe’s into athletes. What’s even harder is trying to get them to think like an athlete. I draw on my

experiences from training and competing to map out how I should deal with each person and how they might react to the training session or challenges presented. I need to know how I’ll take each team member well outside their comfort zone, since I believe that training hard means being comfortable with uncomfortable,” she adds, continuing: “I don’t just want to train them; I want each person on the show to learn and develop life-changing fitness habits. I hope my role as a fitness expert, motivator, mentor and fitness conditioning coach, will inspire and teach these guys to take charge of their life, whether that be at home, at work or in the gym—both



during the show and for the rest of their lives.”

### Becoming Fighting Fit

Outside of the fitness transformations that will no doubt be occurring over the course of the show, the core of it—both in terms of the physical aspects of boxing as well as the mental—is an invaluable part of each contestant’s journey both inside and outside of the ring. “Boxing training is good in so many ways. It helps and enhances your decision-making skills, because you are trained to think and make decisions such a short space of time. It increases your physical and mental agility. It improves your hand-eye coordination, and teaches you how to keep thinking on your feet and keep on planning your next move, even when you’re tired,” says Roy Gumbs, head boxing coach and former boxing champion.

“Boxing also raises your core strength, which takes the strain off of your back—I’ve experienced this myself, after having had surgery on my own back many years ago,” Roy says, adding that it also helps you become mentally calmer and, believe it or not, more zen. If you think boxers are just a bunch of hit-happy louts, you couldn’t be more wrong: All of the coaches agree that while ferocity in fights is necessary, having that kind of release in the ring enables you to be calmer in the rest of your life. “It helps to release aggression, which makes you feel more calm after a workout. Boxing also increases your self-discipline and confidence. When people ask me what I do, I often say that I make people feel good about themselves; it makes the downsides, like the sore knuckles, shin splints and thumb strains, well worth it,” Roy concludes. •

### THE BOXING EXPERT

**Roy Gumbs, Former UK and Commonwealth Middleweight Champion Boxer, Owner and Founder of RG Boxing Academy, and Boxing Coach.**

If you’d like to take some of Roy’s classes, he coaches boxing lessons at The Warehouse Gym ([whgym.com](http://whgym.com)) in Dubai’s Al Quoz. To learn more about Roy and his academy, visit [RGBoxing.com](http://RGBoxing.com)



### THE ENDURANCE EXPERT

**Eva Clarke, 10-Time Guinness World Record Holder and Founder of HUA Fitness.**

Whether it’s through her personal life or her athletic prowess, Eva—a former member of the Australian army and Airforce—is a true pro when it comes to pushing through your boundaries, be it through your physical or indeed your mental strength. Learn more at [huafitness.com.au](http://huafitness.com.au)



### THE STRENGTH EXPERT

**Chris Miller, a strength and condition expert and the Owner and Senior Coach at Strength PT Studio.**

With more than 30 years of experience in the health and fitness industry and more than 20 years as a professional coach, Chris knows what he’s talking about when it comes to making your body strong from the inside out—and he’s a stickler for great form. Learn more at [Facebook.com/StrengthDubai/](https://Facebook.com/StrengthDubai/)

