



White-collar BOXING

31-year-old Lucy Fry hadn't been in a fight since primary school. So, to toughen up, she decided to step into the ring

Lucy Fry trained for 11 sessions a week for her three two-minute rounds at York Hall, Bethnal Green

The whole experience?

Was quite simply, life-changing.

What gear do you need?

A decent pair of boxing shoes, headguard, mouthguard, wraps and gloves (see www.lonsdale.com). Official Fight Night vests were provided by the promoter but I chose to wear my own bright red outfit.

Best advice?

The most important thing is to stick to your training schedule. There are going to be days where the last thing you want to do is train, but with boxing there's nowhere to hide, every session counts. Discipline and commitment are far more important than raw talent.

What's the downside?

You can't embark on fight training without 100 per cent commitment. If you want to fight well, you need to be disciplined. No late nights, no hangovers, and chocolate pudding only as a real treat. Oh and... WARNING: Wrung out nerves and frequent exhaustion can be hazardous for your relationship.

Was is emotional?

In a word: ridiculously. If you have demons, boxing will "out" them. After sparring I'd feel proud, tough and inspired, but often after hard sessions I'd feel exhausted, overwhelmed and even frightened. Being hit can bring up lots of fear, so it's worth being prepared for a few tears.

Where is best to do this?

The Third Space gym (www.thethirdspace.com) in Soho, has a boxing ring, punchbags and a stellar team of instructors and offers members classes of all levels as well as the chance to join the gym's official a "white collar" boxing squad. Or, at the grittier end of the spectrum there's London boxing institution, Peacock Gym (www.peacockgym.com) in Canning Town.

Tips from the top?

My coach, ex-professional boxer and former European flyweight champion, Cathy Brown, stressed the importance of enjoyment: "Soak up the atmosphere, take a deep breath and go out there to enjoy it as much as you can." Same goes for training: consider the tougher moments a challenge, an opportunity for growth, and you'll come out the other side stronger and more self-aware than ever.

Why on earth?

Because it scared me. Sounds crazy but, except for bungee jumping and cuddling up to snakes, I consider fear something that must be faced or it'll fester. I hadn't been hit since a playground tussle at the age of four and, to be honest, trembled at the thought. I wanted to transform both body and mind, to toughen up and, of course, get fit.

How was the training?

Incessant. 11 sessions a week; twice a day, five days a week, and once on Saturdays. It included lung-busting sprints, weights, classes, bagwork, one-to-one sessions with my coach Cathy Brown (www.cathybrown.co.uk) and sparring.

The diet?

With such a high volume of training, eating "clean" (unprocessed), healthy food every 3-4

hours becomes essential to survival. My diet had to be nutrient-dense (3-4 meals a day, with 2-3 snacks, with plenty of protein, carbs, green vegetables and loads of water) so I could train hard, bounce back quickly and keep up my immune system.

The big fight?

Was part of "London Calling" a fight night held twice a year at York Hall, Bethnal Green. It was one of 15 fights, of which four were female. The fights were "no contest" (with the motto: "no winner, no loser, let's just see some great boxing and inspire others to get involved"), three rounds, 2 minutes each. But have no doubt: the punches still hurt. No amount of sparring can prepare you for the rush of walking out through the crowds, stepping into the ring and fighting in front of hundreds of screaming people.