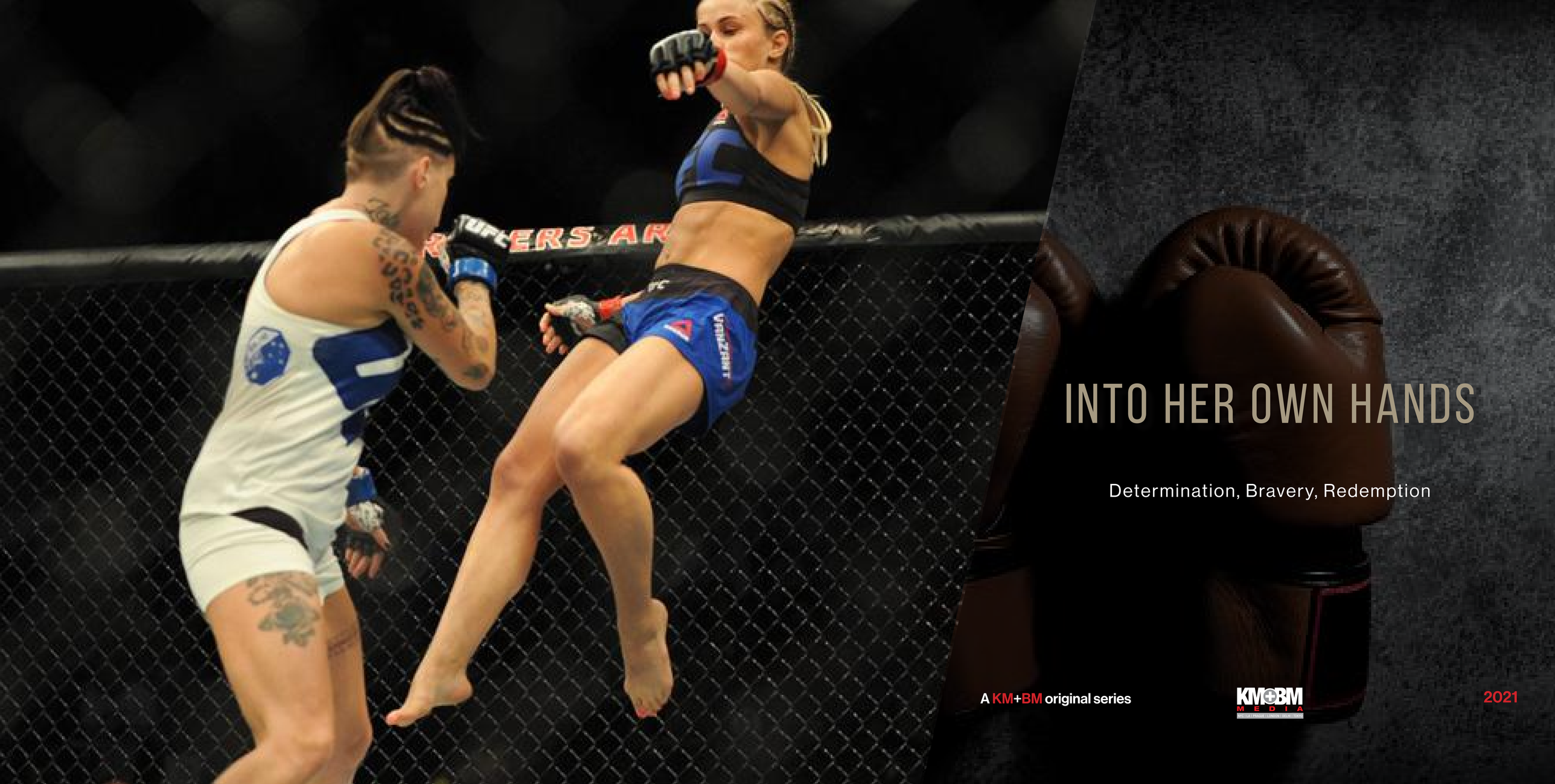


INTO HER OWN HANDS

Determination, Bravery, Redemption

A KM+BM original series

KM+BM MEDIA

2021

OVERVIEW:

SERIES SYNOPSIS:

Into Her Own Hands tells the stories of five professional women fighters who fought to overcome incredible obstacles and take control of their lives. These accomplished women found success through the male-dominated world of professional fighting while facing immense tragedy and have transformed their lives in fascinating ways. From overcoming poverty, homelessness, sexual assualt, and attempted murder, each episode tells a tale of perseverance, and how troubled beginnings lay the groundwork for a fighting spirit.

ACCESS:

Many of these stories will be told on camera for the very first time, and none have been covered as deeply as we will go. With our experience and access within the world of combat sports, we are uniquely equipped and qualified to tell the sport's most fascinating stories using the very best voices possible.

SHOWRUNNERS:

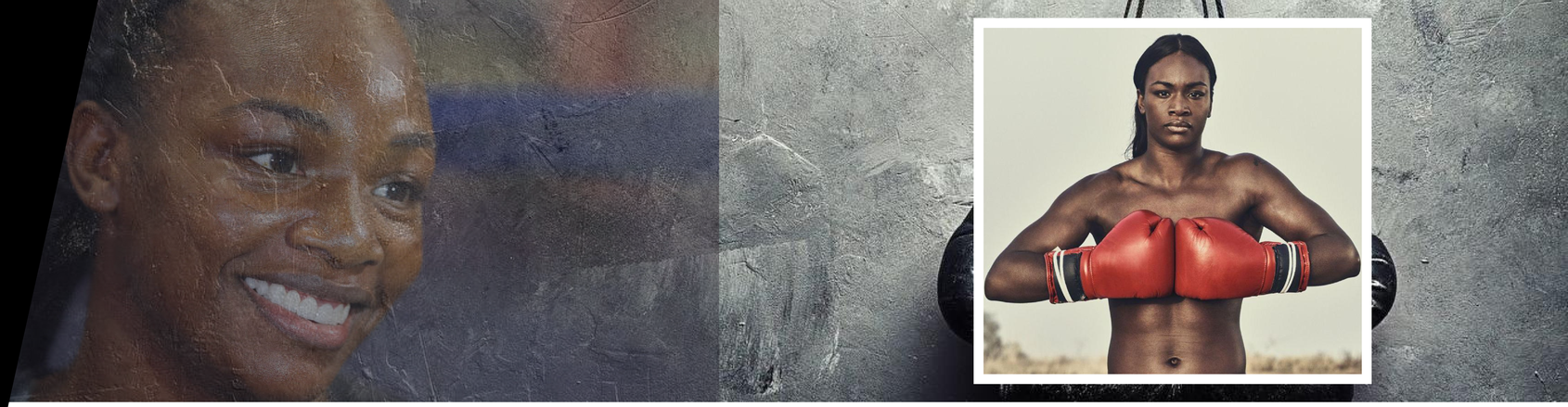
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: DAVE HARMON

Dave Harmon has been an acclaimed, award-winning producer of documentaries for 20+ years. His accomplishments at HBO include a George Foster Peabody Award, and 11 of his fourteen career Emmys® have come within the documentary category. Harmon was also senior producer for the Emmy®-winning documentary-style reality series' 24/7. In addition, he was senior producer for the Emmy®-winning documentary series Hard Knocks: Training With…

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: COREY ERDMAN

Erdman is the lead columnist for CBS Sports' boxing hub "Boxing Scene," and a regular contributor to VICE. As a commentator, he has worked for ESPN, NBC, CBS, SpikeTV, DAZN and SNY. Erdman wrote and co-directed "Omega Man: A Wrestling Love Story," which explored LGBTQ+ issues in pro wrestling, and was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. His podcast "The Breakdown" on Showtime Sports received a Webby award for its coverage of the McGregor/Mayweather fight.

CLARESSA SHIELDS



ACT I:

Growing up in Flint, Michigan, experiencing grinding poverty
Sexually assaulted at the age of five. Is afraid to speak and holds it in
Father goes to prison, is released almost a decade later
Father introduces Claressa to boxing and takes her to the boxing gym
Changes career midstream, joins MMA league for more money

ACT II:

Shields arrives at locale for first MMA fight
Claressa begins her amateur boxing career
Wins Olympic gold medal at the age of 17
Returns home to Flint - the impact of her childhood persists
Wins a gold medal for a second time

ACT III:

Turns pro and makes debut on HBO
A boom period in women's boxing begins, directly attributed to her
Begins to come out of her shell and find her voice

SYNOPSIS:

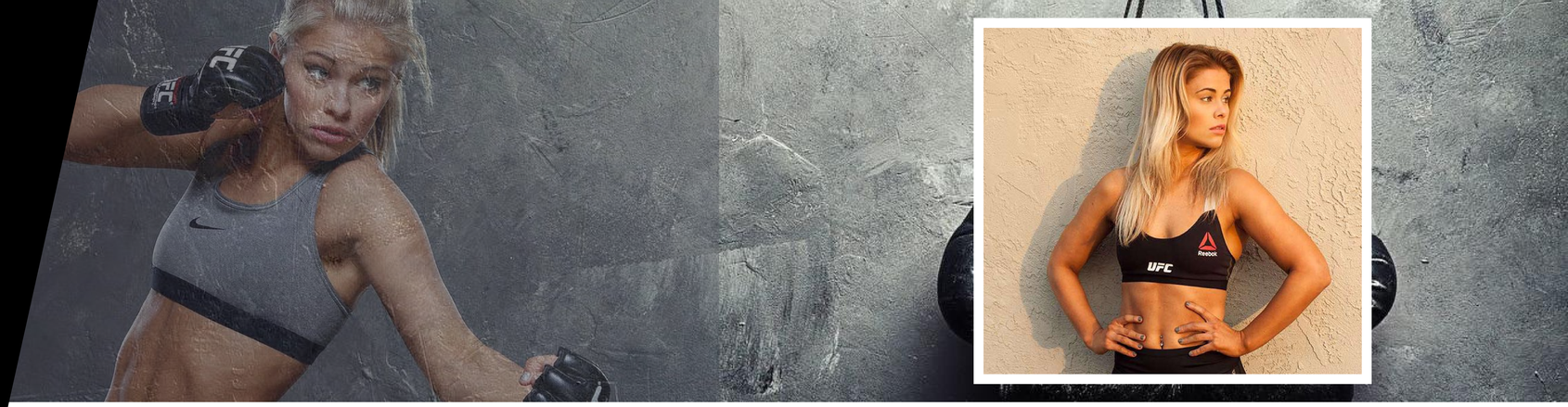
The daughter of an underground streetfighter father, and a mother who battled drug and alcohol addiction, Claressa Shields was left to defend herself in the hardscrabble environment of **Flint, Michigan** from a young age. At the age of five, she was raped by her mother's boyfriend, and was too scared to communicate it to her family.

Growing up in Flint, Michigan with limited access to clean water and surrounded by grinding poverty, Claressa's plans early in life were quite limited: have lots of kids. But after her father Bo was released from prison where he'd spent the first nine years of his daughter's life, he told her about his fights in hotel parking garages and back alleys, about the time he knocked out a bricklayer and made **$35,000** under the table. Claressa now saw her way out of Flint.

Claressa found empowerment in boxing, and would go on to have a remarkable amateur career, losing just one time, a feeling she vowed to never feel again—and still hasn't. After winning her unprecedented two Olympic gold medals, Shields turned professional, changing the landscape of women's boxing. Shields became the fastest boxer ever to become undisputed champion, and ushered in an era of exposure never before enjoyed by women's boxers.

And with her March 2021 title unification victory over Marie Eve Dicaire, Shields is now the only boxer in history, male or female, to hold all four major world titles simultaneously in two weight classes. Few are now arguing her claim to be the greatest woman boxer of all time.

PAIGE VANZANT



ACT I:

Upbringing
Sexual Assault
Moving, changing name
Going to first gym

ACT II:

Excellence at fighting
Stardom
Dancing with Stars, other publicity
Wants more money, leaves for new career

ACT III:

Writes autobiography
Takes control of life, finances
Meets husband Austin
Creates new business ventures
Fights bareknuckles for first time

SYNOPSIS:

Raised in Oregon, Paige appeared to have a typical American upbringing. Her parents owned a dance studio, and the athletically-minded Paige took to all variety of dancing styles. She was also an outdoors lover, enjoying hunting and fishing with her father... But in high school, Paige was sexually assaulted - gang raped by multiple male classmates at a party. She was then bullied by the kids at her school, who accused her of being a slut. Paige's apparently serene life was upended.

Paige's family moved from Oregon to Nevada where everything began to change for the better. Paige changed her surname to VanZant, and found a gym where she learned to defend herself. As Paige's abilities grew in the MMA world, she became more and more popular with fans. In 2016 she was selected for **Dancing With the Stars** competition and finished in second place. One year later, Paige won the celebrity cooking competition "Chopped" on the Food Network. VanZant has since married Austin Vanderford, and the two have a popular TikTok dance channel together.

In 2018, Paige released her bestselling autobiography "**Rise: Surviving the Fight of My Life**" in which she opened up about her harrowing teen years, and how she has dealt with and overcome the trauma.

ANN WOLFE

ACT I:

Overcoming racism while growing up in Louisiana
Mother's passing away from cancer
Father's incarceration
Doing prison time herself

ACT II:

Homeless with her two daughters
Meets father figure "Pops" Billingsley
Learning to box, earning money
Success, first of three titles

ACT III:

Viral KO of Vonda Ward
Becomes trainer, renown with James Kirkland
Named to International Boxing Hall of Fame
Acting role in "Wonder Woman"

SYNOPSIS:

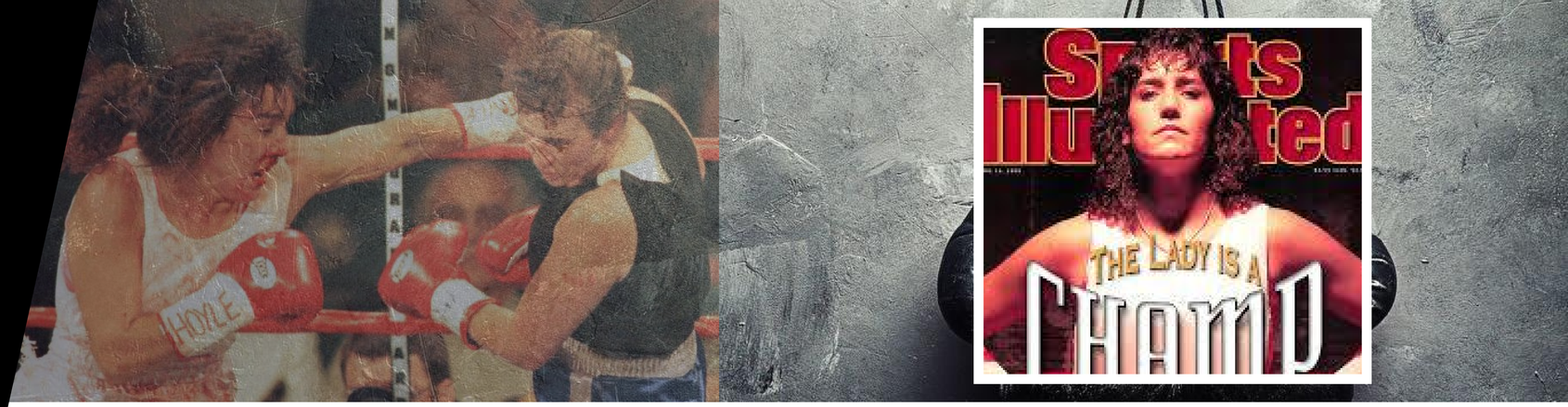
Ann grew up with her parents in Oberlin, Louisiana, in a shack with no running water or electricity. There was plenty of racism in Oberlin, with Ann being called the "n" word regularly, but Ann learned to fight back. At 9 years old, she beat up two white boys who tried to jump her. when Ann was in 7th grade, Ann's mother fell ill with colon cancer so Ann quit school to earn money for the family. Ann's mother passed away from cancer at 46 years old, while Ann's father did time in Louisiana State Penitentiary. When he was released, David Wolfe was killed after being shot 13 times. Before passing away, Ann's mother identified the same anger in Ann that her father had, "Y'all got that Wolfe in you. It's gonna come out. You a killer." Shortly after, Ann began the thug life, attacking people and dealing drugs. She did time in a Florida prison herself.

In **1993** Ann's brother Rickey Lee was shot and killed by police during a robbery. This sunk Ann and her two daughters to new levels of despair. Now in her birthplace of **Austin, Texas**, Ann had a construction job while the girls were in day care, but it wasn't enough. They were homeless for some time, sleeping in parking lots, on a bus, anywhere they could. One night in a hospital waiting room, Ann saw women's boxing on TV for the first time, and she was hooked. Ann walked into the nearest gym where she met Donald "Pops" Billingsley. Pops trained Ann to box, and the seething angry side of Ann Wolfe was allowed to flourish in this environment. After just a few amateur fights, Ann went to the 1998 US Nationals, where she made it to the semifinals. After that it was on to the pro ranks, where Ann was unstoppable. Within a few years, she tied the great Henry Armstrong's record of holding titles simultaneously in **three** different weight classes.

It was in a title fight in her third weight class that Ann went viral. She knocked out Vonda Ward with what is still considered the best knockout in women's boxing history. It was a vicious single blow, where Ann put all of her pent up anger and frustration into her right hand. The 5' 9" Wolfe had KO'd the 6' 6" former basketball star. After winning that title, Ann became a full time trainer. Wolfe has perhaps surpassed her credentials as a fighter, guiding James Kirkland to two middleweight title shots.

In 2015 Ann was inducted into the **International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame**, and two years later was cast as Artemis, a female warrior, in a supporting role for the movie Wonder Woman. Ann said "I want a kid to see me in Wonder Woman and go "Miss Ann, she was homeless and now she's in movies".

CHRISTY MARTIN



ACT I:

Growing up in rural West Virginia, the daughter of a coal miner
Struggles with her sexuality from the age of 12
Enters her first toughwoman contest at the age of 22
Meets her future husband--and attempted murderer--Jim Martin

ACT II:

Marries Jim to hide her sexuality
Mental and physical abuse
Signs with Don King and begins appearing on big events
Goes undefeated for eight years
Makes $4.5 million dollars in career

ACT III:

Pro career winding down, begins abusing cocaine
Becomes romantically involved with childhood crush, Sherry
Jim learns about relationship and attempts to kill Christy
Jim sentenced to life in prison, Christy returns to the ring
Christy has new career as a promoter, married to wife Lisa now

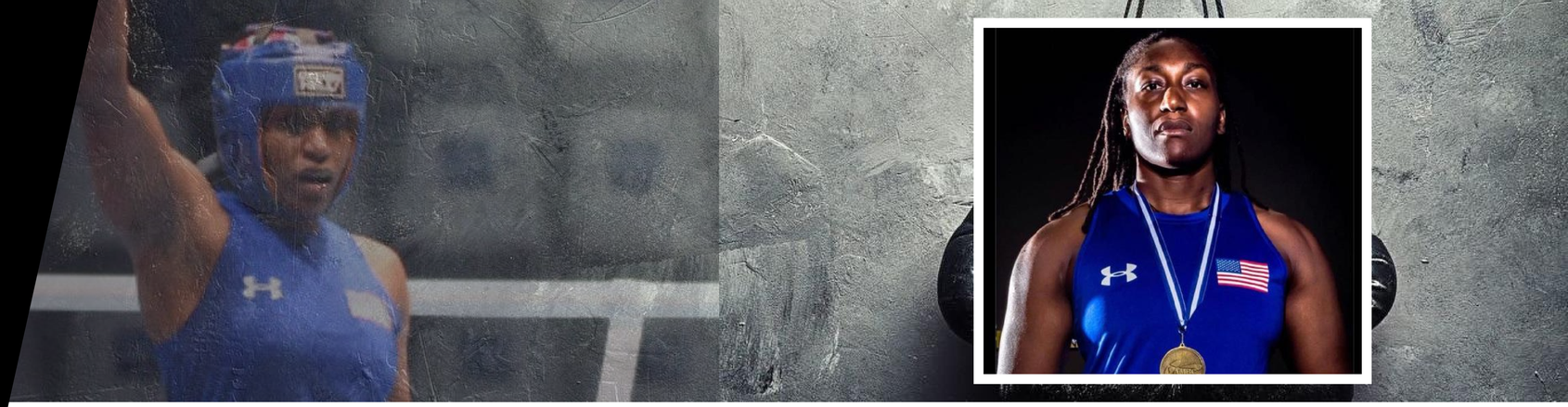
SYNOPSIS:

In the 1990s, Christy Martin was one of the most recognizable boxers on the planet, right alongside Mike Tyson. Outside of the ring, she was known as "**The Coal Miner's Daughter**," an aw-shucks middle America sweetheart who seemed loyal to her trainer and husband Jim Martin. But the reality was, her entire personal life was hiding the truth. From the time Christy was about 12 years old, she says she knew she was attracted to women. But Martin was trapped in an abusive marriage to Jim, one that took away her love of the sport and forced her to project a sexuality that was not her truth.

In 2010, it all came to a frightening end. Christy connected with a high school lover, Sherry Dusk, and re-sparked a romantic connection. She had been hiding her sexuality from Jim. Through her lesbian relationship, Christy worked up the courage to file for divorce. When Christy met with Dusk at a hotel in **Daytona Beach**, Jim followed and watched through a window. When Christy returned home, Jim was waiting with a hunting knife, which he stabbed and slashed her with before shooting her with a 9mm handgun. Miraculously, Christy managed to get up and make it to the road, where she hailed an oncoming vehicle and made it to safety.

In this episode, we will hear the harrowing details of Martin's survival of attempted murder, her grappling with her sexuality, and help crystallize her status as one of sports' true pioneers and inspirational figures.

DANIELLE PERKINS



ACT I:

Grows up in a boxing-loving family--but is pushed towards basketball
Becomes a star player at St. John's
Starts pro basketball career in Europe
Is temporarily paralyzed after being hit by a car

ACT II:

Begins rehabbing and re-learning how to walk
Goes to a boxing gym to help rehabilitate
Discovers she is a natural boxer--only has men her size to spar
Starts her amateur boxing career

ACT III:

Wins World Amateur Championship
Turns pro, finds stigma in women's heavyweight division
Fights stereotypes about women her size
Wants to become the next American heavyweight champion

SYNOPSIS:

Perkins was a standout basketball star at **St. John's University** in New York, ranking in the Top 10 in the NCAA in rebounding during her final collegiate year, springboarding into a professional career overseas in Turkey. However, tragedy struck in the offseason while training in Brooklyn, when Perkins was struck by a car while crossing the street. Her injuries were nearly unthinkable: a fractured skull, a dislocated neck, a dislocated shoulder, and damaged nerves from the waist down. At the peak of her athleticism, Perkins was paralyzed, learning to walk once again. At her lowest point, Perkins contemplated taking her own life. Perkins said, "if I couldn't be athletic again, then I didn't want to be alive." Perkins developed the ability to walk again, but was still struggling psychologically, finding fear everywhere. She would hail a cab to help her cross streets. As part of her rehabilitation, Perkins' friend convinced her to try boxing, both for its physical and mental benefits.

Inside the boxing ring, Perkins not only recalibrated her athleticism, but she found herself again. At over six feet tall and a chiseled 200 pounds, Perkins didn't find a lot of women who looked like she did in the boxing gym—so she sparred with heavyweight men. It wouldn't be long before she collected Golden Gloves honors, and then her highest amateur boxing achievement, a gold medal at the World Amateur Championships in the heavyweight division.

Women's boxing was made an official event in the **Olympics** for the first time in 2012, but only three weight classes, flyweight, welterweight and middleweight, were allowed. Though additional weight classes have been added for the upcoming Tokyo games, they still top out at middleweight, or roughly 160 pounds. For a woman of Perkins' size, the only way to continue on in boxing was to turn pro. Now 3-0 as a professional boxer, Perkins recently fought on one of the first all women's pay-per-view events in almost 25 years, headlined by her friend Claressa Shields. Her goal, beyond winning the heavyweight title, is to open the door for other elite athletes her size to step into the squared circle.

"My goal is for people to say: 'You're 200lbs? Train hard enough and maybe you can fight Danielle'."

Danielle Perkins has overcome tremendous odds, both physically and systemically, to get to where she is today. But the path she is on may open up an entirely new avenue for women's sports in general. Perkins is changing what we think a women's boxer should look like, and very well may change what we think the heavyweight champion looks like as well.

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