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Tara Bono, in the blue, and her opponent, Tara DelBianco in the red at the LI Fight for Charity.

Bono: Blood, sweat, tears for a good cause

By: Tara Bono February 4, 2019 0

It came as a shock. The first time the 16 oz. glove hit my face its force suspended time. The blow came in the form of a right hook, and I didn't block it.

When time began to move forward again, intuition guided my recovery and I let the six months of training guide my next few moves. Block, jab, jab. Duck. Right to the body, left, left. I learned by round two that my right foot wasn't landing, so I changed my strategy.

My coaches, the Stanton brothers, were probably telling me that I was overreacting, except the roar of the freight train that was in my own head. It was a mix of nothing at the same time.

If my fans were chanting, if my coaches were instructing me, I didn't hear. My own static voice was all I heard. Don't get hit. Don't fall down. You're stronger than her. You're faster than her. She's wobbling.

In 10th grade, we were assigned *The Contender* in English class. It wasn't the violence that intrigued me, because I consider my love of boxing the instinct-fed-energy that seems to take hold of fighting athletes. I was hardly an athlete myself – I danced through high school, took a softball class, and a tennis course brought down my GPA. Still, I was in my mind.

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Upon hearing about the LI Fight for Charity, I knew it was my opportunity to satisfy that curiosity. I've never been self-motivated enough to stick to a regular workout but Fighting for Charity gave me that incentive. If I didn't go to the gym one week, I wasn't just hurting myself – I was putting my fight and the ability to fund raise a lot of money at risk. I knew the kids at FREE and the programs depended on my ticket sales. So, I showed up. I ran more miles than I've collectively run in years. I set up a heavy bag in my living room and trained during nights "off."

Towards the end, "my fight" became all-consuming. Anytime I saw someone I knew, they would only ask about the upcoming event. "Are you excited?!" was the number one question. I would usually reply with "yeah – it's close!" but I actually wanted to throw up.

Fight night was filled with polar emotions. Before my fight, I was so full of stress that it completely distorted my mind. I remember being in the back hallway right before my song started, wishing that my mind would leave my body and send it on its own into the ring to fend for itself. But the music pulled me in, and we went to the ring. For a moment, I got to enjoy the ring to myself and hear my fans cheering. Then the bell rang, and I started fighting hard. The three rounds felt like a lifetime but the enormous sense of accomplishment after each round made the next that much easier.

When the bell rang for the last time, I checked myself. I made it. I was still standing. I knew I took at least one round, and I held my own. The same adrenaline that had been my arch nemesis, choking me just 10 minutes before, came back, but this time it came in the form of relief, joy, pride, and pure excitement.

I wiped my face and smiled at the blood smeared on my hand wraps. My opponent had an impact on me, a bigger impact. I raised \$18,000 that night and collectively, \$100,000 will be given away to several charities. That night, I owe a tremendous thanks to my friends, family, sponsors, colleagues, and even strangers who supported me and motivated me to show up to the gym, train, and take a few punches for a good cause.

Tara Bono is the marketing manager for EmPower Solar and was named an LIBN Top 50 Woman in Business in 2018. As a volunteer boxer for the Long Island Fight for Charity, Tara raised over \$18,000 for nonprofits across Long Island.

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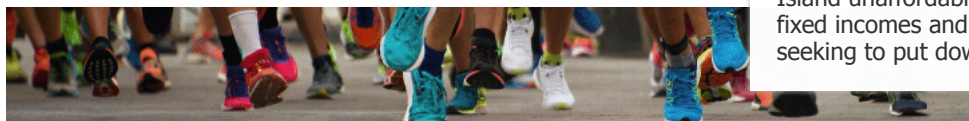


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