

# Christina Leora Poulos

Contributed by Lilly  
 Thursday, 16 October 2008  
 Last Updated Wednesday, 22 October 2008

Lilly Felice talks to Christina Leora Poulos about her first amateur fight and some of her strengths and struggles while preparing

Tell me a little bit about yourself and your background: I grew up in Port Jefferson, New York, on the north shore of Long Island. I was a real active kid, running around, playing soccer, kickball, and I was always up in the trees. I'd climb as high as I could before calling my mom outside to watch in horror as I hung like a monkey and dropped straight down onto the ground. I craved competition. In 2nd grade age I was creating obstacle courses and set up teams of kids to compete. I created flyers to advertise the events in my backyard and awarded prizes to the winners. When I wasn't going door-to-door challenging the neighborhood kids to race or arm wrestle with me, I'd sell arts & crafts, or Halloween candy out of my Caboodle (remember those, girls?). To this day my mom doesn't know why one day my piggy bank suddenly became empty. I'd invested my small savings in multiple lemonade stands, which I had my friends run for me. I would literally dart up and down my block replenishing stock and collecting money. By paying them on a commission-type basis, I got them excited to sell everything from my homemade paintings to pb & j sandwiches. I loved being able to orchestrate ways people could work together as a team! I even created business cards for my young team of employees, with crayons. This was all a prelude to the mix of careers I'm passionate about today. I run a PR company to promote events and help businesses grow through advertising & marketing. I also design training & nutrition programs to encourage people to live healthy and happy lives. And just recently I fell absolutely in love -with training to fight on a competitive level. How long have you been training: I started training May '08. Who do you train with and where do you currently train: I train under World Kickboxing Champion Tommy "BEE" Bottone, who's produced 12 world champions out of his school, AFC Kickboxing ringoffirekickboxing.com. Besides feeling at home at AFC Kickboxing, I am very fortunate to have found a place where my team feels like family. Right away I recognized Tommy as a valuable mentor, as he's continuously provided me with ideas & advice on how to grow my fitness business. Besides keeping myself and everyone else on track as we train for fighting -or fitness, he wants everyone to succeed with whatever we set out to accomplish in life. I too, want the best for my clients and everyone around me, as, as helping people achieve their goals is what makes me truly happy. Everyone who is ready to devote hours of their life to training, deserves to be at a place that's their perfect fit! Did you encounter any obstacles when you got you into training: In March '08 I started to stay for the kickbox class at the school where I was training my grp of women. When a fighter friend came to visit work with me a few months later, I was disappointed to learn that I wasn't being taught the basics: how to stand, breathe, etc. I stood in one place when I shadowboxed, and had no idea what wrapping your hands was all about. I was actually hitting the bag in the MMA gloves I used for cardio kickboxing. So in those 2 months I thought I was "training", all I had been doing was burning extra calories. I'm not sure if it was because I was not being taken seriously as a woman, or if my instructor didn't see potential in me. It was just very discouraging. That school soon shut down, and I went along my original instructor and my following of women clientele, to train at this brand new school. I excitedly launched (pro bono) the entire PR campaign, and we had over 200+ members signed up before the doors opened. Once opening day arrived, I was thrown for a loop. Each day I was severely harassed. (I do not care to share the details of exactly what happened). Stunned and confused, I stuck it out as long as I could, as I do believe you can always find a positive in any person, or situation. But after receiving similar complaints from every single woman who took my class, I realized it wouldn't be right if I stayed and subjected my clients and myself to anymore mistreatment. And with it became more apparent each day, that the owner & instructors were running it for the right reasons, I gave up on waiting to see a sign of light at the end of that tunnel. I strongly suggest that newcomers to the sport -man or woman, question everything, check credentials, and do your research before you sign with any school! Why do you fight: I fight because of the incredible feeling of self-accomplishment it gives you! I truly enjoy waking up each day, doing what I do: finding as many blocks of time as possible in my schedule, to work in the different elements that go into training. I have given up on trying to explain how it feels to those who still question me. I look to people in my life who respect my decision to move forward with fighting, even though they may not fully "get it". So to the people that give me their support because they simply see how happy and alive it makes me feel -thank you! I am truly blessed to have such an amazing circle of friends, family, trainers & team! Congratulations on your recent win at your first fight! Tell me a bit about how you prepared yourself for this (diet, training, lifestyle, etc): After about 6 weeks of working with my trainer, he told me we had 6 weeks until my 1st fight. That was the push I needed to get serious about how I scheduled my training, eating and sleeping. Working to get all 3 of those components is essential, and directly reflects making big gains in your improvement! Each night I'd plan my eating /exercise/sleep schedule, with the goal being to make each day of training count. Don't short yourself on any of the elements that go into training (cardio, mitt, bag work, shadowboxing, sparring etc) Be consistent, and don't miss any opportunity to train. Even on days you may be lacking in energy -don't think about it for too long, just get to your gym. Training has become a necessity in my getting through the many obstacles in life. While you may also come to rely on training as a form of therapy, do take 1 day a week, and get a massage, some extra sleep, read, watch fights or practice visualization. Not only do you deserve, but you NEED that day of rest to recharge your body and mind. What are some things you learned that you would give other fighters advice on for getting ready for their first fight: It took me a few weeks into my 6 wks of fight prep, to find a balance. I also struggled a bit with some remnant feelings of confusion as to whether or not I had what it takes to be a fighter. I looked to my trainer's confidence in me, to help me get through -and give each training session

my all. While the fact that you have your 1st fight hanging over your head, don't get ahead of yourself and stress about your upcoming ring debut. If you have the right trainer your trainer should educate you on how to train, you shouldn't be worried about your fight. When I first started sparring, I would get real nervous and was skeptical about how everyone spars with each other &ndash;the team I train with is made up of all different ages, sizes, different styles of fighting, levels of experience. I'd come in and gear up and it was like, the longer I'd sit there and wait my turn, the more anxious and worried about going in the ring with someone who was going to go hard &ndash;not that I was worried about getting hurt, but that I was so much a beginner that it would be no fun for them to go easy on me. Then I came to realize that the more you spar and the more you mixed up who you spared with, the better off you'd be when it came time to fight. Each time you spar, push yourself through those last few rounds, picture yourself in the last few rounds of a fight. You may just be singing at the top of your lungs as you pound back water on your ride home. I savor those feelings of kicking my endorphins into overdrive! J After having your first fight, do you feel any different as a fighter than you did before: Going into this, I was aware of the difference between those that dreamt and envisioned themselves as fighters, some even spending countless hours training and watching fights &hellip;and the ones who relentlessly train for, do it, and enjoy it. I made the decision to put my heart into training, while reassuring myself that if I fought my 1st fight and then learned it wasn't for me, that it was okay! I was careful to correct those that prematurely labeled me as a fighter and repeatedly reminded myself that while I most definitely loved training, I was going to fight to test my skills -and have fun! Do you have any fighter that you look up to that you would like to mirror your skills off of: I really respect Gina Carano for her years of training to become strong in muay thai, and then not long after learning some ground game, challenged herself by moving forward, into MMA. I admire how she deals with being both loved and envied because she is beautiful, well spoken, and amazingly talented. And even though she's heard over and over that she's "the face of women's MMA", she remains humble. She doesn't trash talk her opponents or make cocky remarks about her career as a fighter, actress, or any other opportunities that may come her way. Watch her fights, especially her most recent, and it's apparent to see that her skill level just keeps getting better -a direct result of her growing dedication to the sport! So while many fighters say it because it sounds good, it's obvious that she fights because it's truly in her heart. With the growing interest in MMA, would you consider training towards that sport and why: Absolutely! Up until now I've always enjoyed watching MMA, and I think all of the elements that go into training for it are truly fascinating. My plan was not to throw rolling into the mix until after my 1st fight. I do know that it entails more "brain" work than throwing punches & kicks, and consistency is especially important. I am going into it with the mindset that if my schedule doesn't allow me to devote enough time to learning the basics of being on the ground, I'll stick with striking for now. What's next for you: My next fight is November 21st! I was thrilled to hear the news that I got another fight lined up so fast, and very excited about taking things to the next level with this training camp. As I continue my training, I also looking forward to building up my Training Team, a fitness program that I designed for women of ALL ages & fitness levels. It's a dynamic blend kickboxing, cardio, strength, pilates & yoga. I truly love helping anyone I can become healthy &ndash;and happy! I'm now creating customized training Sports Nutrition plans &ndash;which will be available to my clients online. In just a few days I'll be launching my new website: [christinaleora.com](http://christinaleora.com) Is there anything else that you'd like to add: The more you ask, the more likely you'll receive advice &ndash;good and bad, from fellow fighters and friends. It can be a little overwhelming. Seek to find those that care about you and have your best interest at heart. While you soak up everything they tell you, go back and discuss it with your trainer, to confirm your aligning your training regime with your specific goals as a fighter. As a newbie interested in training with the intent to fight, it is essential that once you find the right place to train, you put all of your trust in your trainer, as he/she is the one spending the most time working with you, and will know best what you are capable of when it comes ring time. Thank you, [wfighter.com](http://wfighter.com) and staff for providing myself and other future female fighters with an excellent platform to ask questions and gain knowledge! Thank you for allowing me to share my story!