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Pinay leads bid for women boxing in 2012 Olympics

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IOC officials, who attended the competition, were impressed by the orderly conduct of the tournament and the widespread turnout.

Embuldeniya, 58, was born in the Philippines and earned a degree in medical technology at UST in 1971. She later migrated to Canada, working as a specialized laboratory analyst for over 30 years. Embuldeniya and her husband Herb were married in Canada and moved to Sri Lanka in 1999. Their daughter Winona, a lawyer, lives in Canada.

Embuldeniya, a Canadian citizen, has been a boxing judge for over 20 years. She is in the history books as the first female to be appointed as an international boxing judge by AIBA, the first female to be elected to the Executive Committee and the first female lead technical delegate in an AIBA world tournament.

When Embuldeniya moved to her husband's native country, she led a crusade to encourage Sri Lankan army women to take up boxing in 2000. She is a popular figure in Sri Lanka as a judge and jury member for local boxing championships.

Wu said if women's boxing is included in the London calendar, it will comprise five divisions of eight fighters each. Men's boxing will be reduced from 11 to 10 divisions so that the entire boxing program will consist of 246 men and 40 women for a total of 286 participants. Wu explained that the lightest men's division, lightweight, will be adjusted from 48 to 49 kilograms and other changes

will be made in the other categories to reduce the divisions to 10.

If women's boxing is not included, the men's program will remain with 11 weight divisions in London.

Dr. Charles Butler, an American who heads the AIBA Medical Commission, recently declared that women's Olympic-style boxing is safer than men's. "Women's boxing has a 15-year history of safety," he said in a report. "Tournament statistics show lower injury and concussion rates. The increased safety of women's boxing may be dependent on physiological differences between women and men. The female athlete has a more flexible neck, less shoulder and neck musculature and less upper body strength than the male athlete. In boxing which allows only arm blows, women suffer injury and concussion less commonly than men."

At the last World Championships which Embuldeniya supervised, Butler said the concussion rate was 0.0096, less than one percent, with no incidence of hand injuries and lacerations and only two nosebleeds and two minor facial bruises.

Vargas said the ABAP is backing AIBA's campaign for women's boxing all the way. The ABAP has 12 fighters in the women's pool and flyweight Annie Albania, 26, is the best bet for an Olympic gold medal. Albania lost a close 4-3 decision to Can Can Ren of China in the lightbantamweight finals to settle for silver at the last World Championships and has won gold medals in the last two SEA Games. ■

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