

Claressa Shields Up For Award As Top Amateur Athlete in America

Written by The Sweet Science
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(COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.) – Historic Olympic gold medalist **Claressa Shields** (Flint, Mich.) has been named a semifinalist for the prestigious James E. Sullivan award, which honors the top amateur athlete in the nation. Shields became the first female middleweight Olympic gold medalist this past summer at the 2012 Olympic Games. The 17-year-old Shields defeated opponents nearly twice her age en route to the top of the medal stand, becoming the second youngest boxer ever to win an Olympic gold medal.

Shields is one of 15 semifinalists nominated for the award, which is known as the “Oscar” of the sports world. Older than the Heisman, the AAU James E. Sullivan Award has been presented annually by the AAU since 1930. Based on the qualities of leadership, character, sportsmanship, and the ideals of amateurism, the AAU Sullivan Award goes far beyond athletic accomplishments and honors those who have shown strong moral character.

A senior at Flint Northwestern High School, Shields shocked the boxing world in early 2012, knocking off much older and seasoned opponents both domestically and abroad. The then 16-year-old dominated her competition at the inaugural U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Women, defeating her opponents by a combined 108-64 point margin. She then moved on to international action, rolling over two former World Champions in her international debut to win 2012 Continental Championships gold.

After qualifying for the Olympic Games at the 2012 Women’s World Championships, Shields prepared to battle the world’s best in London. The teenager defeated her fourth former World Champion of the year in her first bout of the Olympics, winning a preliminary contest over Sweden’s **Anna Laurell**. Shields beat foes from Kazakhstan and Russia in her next two bouts to win Olympic gold and claim her own piece of history.

Shields has had a tremendous impact on her community in Flint, Mich., providing the youth in the area with a much needed positive role model. Having overcome great obstacles in her own childhood, she has motivated people of all ages to pursue their dreams no matter where they came from.

Shortly after returning from London, Shields returned to Flint’s Northwestern High School, and is currently focused on graduating from high school and plans to attend college. The first U.S. Olympic gold medalist to return to the sport of amateur boxing, Shields will attempt to defend

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her Olympic title at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Online voting for the 83rd Sullivan award begins today and will take place via the AAU website at www.aausullivan.org . Voting will close on March 17, which will also happens to be Shields' 18th birthday. She is the first female boxer to be named a semifinalist for the award and the first athlete in the sport of boxing since Andre Ward in 2005.

USA Boxing, as the national governing body for Olympic-style boxing, is the United States' member organization of the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA) and a member of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC).