

BY ROSE GRACIE | PHOTOS BY CHERIE CARLSON



# the AMBASSADOR

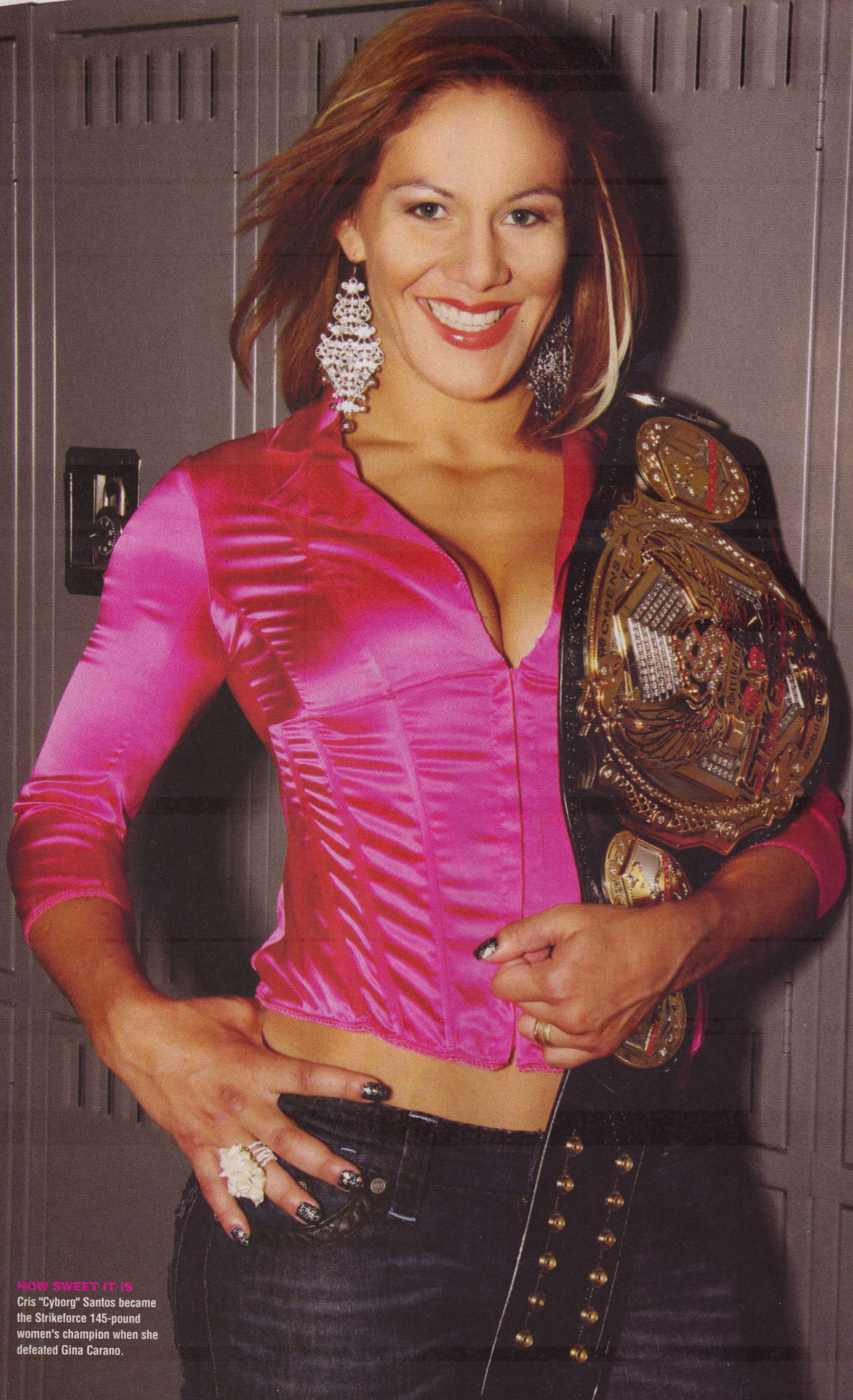
**Strikeforce Champ Cris "Cyborg" Santos**  
Is More Than Just a Fierce Fighter.  
Promoting Female MMA Is One of Her Goals.

*Cris "Cyborg" Santos has, without a doubt, set new standards for women's MMA. She is an inspiration and breath of hope to so many, including my daughters and many other little girls, who can look up to this humble and talented woman.*

*But there is more, much more here, than just a fierce fighter.*

*For the past couple of months, I have had the privilege to get to know Cris better. And it has been a pleasure.*

*While hanging out with her, however, I realized something very quickly. Because of the language barrier (her English is limited), it is hard for people to get an in-depth look at her personality. This story will break that language barrier. — RG*



## the AMBASSADOR

### THE EARLY YEARS

**How was your life growing up? Were your parents strict?**

I had a very happy childhood. Although my parents were divorced, they remained close friends, which helped us have a strong foundation, so making the right choices was not a hard thing to do.

**It's impressive and admirable that they got along after the divorce. Did you guys go back and forth between their homes?**

They divorced before I had my first birthday. So I stayed with my mom until I was about 9 years old. Then I decided to go with my dad for a while, and I actually ended up staying with him until I was about 15.

**Your brothers. How old are they, and how is your relationship with them?**

I have two brothers. One is 28 (Rafael), and the younger is only 11 (Emanoel). I have always had a good relationship with both of them. I am a good sister to them.

**I guess it's like any family, I imagine. There are fights. In my case, I have actually fought more Gracies than any other MMA fighter out there. Some I beat, and some gave me a beating. How was it in your house? Did you actually beat them?**

(Laughs) I think you had it worse than anyone else. Honestly, I got beat up every time, although I am not sure they are up for a rematch now (laughs).

### THE SOCIAL SIDE

**How old were you when you started dating?**

I was 19 when I had my first "official" boyfriend ... and that was Cyborg.



**While we're on the topic, tell us what your perfect date night is.**

Preferably sushi, a movie and then close the date with a night out in the town clubbing. If this is after a victory, then it's heaven (laughs).

**What do you usually do for fun?**

I read a lot, go to the beach, hang out with my girlfriends and, of course, play with my dog Fedor (laughs).

**Living in a different country than your own is a hard thing for anyone. How has this transition been for you so far?**

I am slowly adapting. I miss my family very much, but I also keep in touch with them often. I stay focused, and it is obviously better for my career if I stay around here.

### THE "OTHER" JOB

**In the world of MMA, a lot of women, including me, are not just mothers and housewives. They have their own jobs and are also directly connected – and have an essential job – in their husband's career. How does that play out on your everyday life?**

Our days are very busy. During training camp, it obviously gets even worse because of our hectic training schedule.

When it's my turn to fight, Cyborg (Evangelista) helps me get the house somewhat organized. He cooks for himself because I am always on a diet, and he basically takes care of himself.

If I am not fighting, I do everything in the house; he only takes the trash out. I like taking care of the house, cooking and just doing all that stuff. And, of course, every week I have one big housekeeping day (laughs).

### THE NUTRITION ANGLE

**Speaking of food, what is your diet like?**

It is extremely hard but essential. Since I had that weight miscalculation when I did not make the weight, I have put it in my mind that I will always go lower than usual so something like that will never happen again. I eat very healthy, but, of course, after the fight I take a couple days to "pig out" and eat some much-desired junk food.

### THE FIGHTING LIFE

**When did you come to the realization that you had the talent for sports?**

I was always an athlete. Since I was very little, I turned to sports to overcome anything that came up. I played handball since I was 12 years old, and I also did track and field. I competed professionally in both sports.

**HOW SWEET IT IS**  
Cris "Cyborg" Santos became the Strikeforce 145-pound women's champion when she defeated Gina Carano.



**MORE THAN ONE GOAL**

In addition to fighting, Cris Santos intends to promote women's MMA by attending expos and other measures.

## the AMBASSADOR

### **How did you end up in MMA?**

It was when I was 19 years old, playing handball professionally. Our team would practice against the boys for our competition prep. One day one of the parents asked me if I liked fighting. At that time I honestly didn't know anything about it, but he gave me a chute boxe card and said that I was talented and should try a class. I did.

### **What was your first impression of the sport?**

I thought it was very hard! (laughs).

### **And now?**

Now I feel like I found myself. I love every bit of it. To me it seems that all the other sports I did before were just a preparation for MMA. I consider myself very fortunate, and I am thrilled with it.

### **How do your parents feel about you being a professional fighter?**

In the beginning, it was a bit hard for

them. Of course, no parents want to think that their little girl is doing something like that. I don't believe they are any different than any parents out there who have a hard time understanding what the sport is all about.

They had a very old vision of what MMA really is, but now they love it. They understand the sport and see it as a career like anything else. I actually think they are [now] my No. 1 fans (laughs).

### **Who guides and helps you with your fights and training game plan?**

My manager, Rudimar, has a big part on all of it, but I am always in shape and always training. Even if I am not fighting at the time, I always work in all the different areas of my game. I am an avid competitor, so I like to keep up with the competitions in jiu-jitsu, wrestling, boxing and muay Thai.

**You have become a star in this sport, and some are considering you the real face of woman's MMA. What are your plans for**

### **the future now that you got this big job ahead of you?**

My plans are simple. I will continue with my training, learn more everyday, make my fans happy, and, of course, continue to promote woman's MMA throughout the world.

*The Writer: Rose Gracie, Helio Gracie's granddaughter, is married to WEC fighter Javi Vazquez.*

### **Jabs**

**Name:** Cristiane "Cyborg" Santos

**Age:** 24

**Born:** July 9, 1985

**MMA Record:** 8-1

**Husband:** Evangelista Santos (a Strikeforce middleweight)

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