

BLOOD SPORT

Pit bulls are dogfighting's greatest victims, but communities around the country also pay a steep price.



HELP FOR THE WEARY
Humane agent Jennifer Kulina in Columbus, Ohio, advocates for abused pit bulls like Rita.

OBLIVIOUS TO THE OOZING ABSCESS beneath her eye, Rita leaps across the sofa and gnaws the arm of a chair before plopping onto Jennifer Kulina's lap for a belly rub. "How could you ever fight this dog?" Kulina asks, recalling the blood that once flowed from the brown pit bull's chin. ¶ A humane agent at the Capital Area Humane Society in Columbus, Ohio, Kulina filed five counts of

animal cruelty against Rita's owner on July 17, the same day Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick was indicted on felony dogfighting charges. A table at Kulina's shelter bears evidence of Rita's case and many others—heavy logging chains used as leashes and tethers, certificates listing champion bloodlines, a "keep journal" detailing treadmill regimens and fight statistics, and a calendar recording breeding dogs' heat cycles. ¶ "They have no voice," Kulina says of the pit bulls in her community. "I have a chance to be a voice for them. It's scary, but it's an honor."

¶ Suited up in a bulletproof vest, Kulina prowls the back alleys and mean streets in search of animals in distress. Many are pit bulls with chewed-up faces, fighting scars, and open wounds. Some she can help, but for others, it's too late.



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