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Baumgardner headed to Denver

BY JEFF ARENZ
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FREMONT -- Fremont Wreckers boxer Alycia Baumgardner is about to secure her place in local sports history.

Baumgardner, 15, will become the first Fremont female to participate in a national boxing tournament when she competes in the 2009 USA Boxing National Championships next week at Denver Coliseum in Denver.

"I feel excited because its my first year going (to nationals)," said Baumgardner, who carries an 18-2 record through her first 20 bouts. "It will be a new experience for me."

The tournament, from June 8-13, features boxers from more than 15 national regions. Each region is broken down into four divisions -- Open Men, Open Women, Junior Men and Junior Women. Each division has more than 12 weight classes.

At 15, Baumgardner has gained experience with a short learning curve. According to Fremont Wreckers coach Buddy Laughlin, she has natural talent for boxing.

"I've had Jerome Johnson win this tournament twice in the early 1990s, and Alycia is as good as he was," Laughlin said. "She has speed and boxing savvy. Some people that you come across just have an eye for it. Her talent-level, as far as boxing against other females, is the same as Jerome."

Laughlin said Baumgardner has the ability to become a fan favorite.

"About a month ago, Alycia fought a female from the Toledo Men's Club in Toledo," Laughlin said. "Boxing fans up there are known for supporting fighters from Toledo. But during that fight, the fans were cheering for Alycia. They were just crazy over her."

Baumgardner, the daughter of Mario and Sherry Guzman, has already enjoyed tournament boxing success. In January, she became a regional champion at the Silver Gloves Tournament in Cincinnati.

Confidence has been a large factor in the success of Baumgardner.

"I've gained confidence in myself through the fights that I've had," Baumgardner said. "In knowing that I have confidence in my upcoming fight, I can win it."

Baumgardner has been training five nights per week to prepare for the national championships. She has been working on sparring and hitting the weight bag regularly. To build up her endurance in the ring, Baumgardner has been running about one mile every day.

"I've been training for this for a while and I feel that I'm ready," Baumgardner said. "This feels like it's my time."

Laughlin said Baumgardner could go a long way in proving herself on a national level in Denver.

"She will go down in the record books, if she wins this tournament," Laughlin said. "No female from Fremont has ever won it. If you look at some of the people who have won this tournament over the years, you'll see boxers like Sugar Ray Leonard, Tommy Hearns and Oscar De La Hoya. Fighters who win this tournament have gone on to better their careers."

The USA Boxing National Championships are used as one of the steps in determining which boxers qualify for the U.S. Olympic Boxing Team.

Although women's boxing is not yet a medal sports in the Olympics, Baumgardner dreams that could change for the 2012 or the 2016 Summer Games.

"My major goal is to fight in the Olympics some day," Baumgardner said. "I think this trip to Colorado is going to prepare me for the future."



Alycia Baumgardner of The Fremont Wreckers boxes at the Fremont Legion earlier this year. (Lisa Wilson | News-Messenger file photo)