

The Inverness Courier

Hard graft worthwhile for Harper

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SARAH Harper has been putting in the hard yards to ensure she is in peak condition for one of the biggest night's of her amateur career so far.

The Highland Boxing Academy fighter is one of 14 bouts scheduled to compete at the club's first-ever show in Inverness next month.

Taking on Bannockburn-based 1314 ABC's Robyn Swan in a women's lightweight (60kg) contest, Harper is currently stepping up her preparations in a bid to make sure she is ready for what awaits.

"In the morning I'll go out for a run, which usually takes an hour, before going to work," said the 25-year-old, who is employed as a hairdresser with, fittingly for her, Uppercut in the city centre.

"After work, I'll go to club for the girls boxing exercise class and then do some sparring with the men, before getting around 10pm.

"I do that at least three times a week, while also going to the gym, so it's a lot of hard work.

"However, it's what you have to do and I like the challenge.

"Boxing is definitely not a sport you can do if you're not focused. It takes so much with training and other things.

"But I'm fortunate in that my work are very good at letting me have time off when I need it, be it an extra hour here or there. Apart from my family, they are the most supportive in terms of my boxing."

Harper has only been boxing seriously for the past three years. Having previously done kickboxing before losing interest, she was persuaded to try boxing by academy head coach Liam Foy.

"I used to cut Liam's hair and he was always going at me to come along and give it a try," she said.

"He told me to come along for a session and if I didn't like it then I didn't have to come back, but I did.

"I just enjoy competing and fighting, so boxing gave me the opportunity to do both."

It has been all under her own steam that Harper, from Culduthel, found herself in boxing.

Family and friends give her backing, but what has it been like to go into a sport that by in large is still male dominated?

"The guys are excellent with me, whether it be training or sparring," she said.

"They have all been tremendously helpful to me. It's always a good laugh, although you don't get to talk too much because you are always busy training.

"People have said to me do I feel a bit shy when surrounded by so many men, but I don't think they look at me any more like I'm a girl. I think they see more as simply a team-mate."

Harper has already experienced life inside the ring, but insists that side is still something of a learning process having only had a handful of fights so far.

"I think to do well inside the ring you have to keep calm," she said.

"The first time I was in the ring, I was so nervous. I could hear really clearly what the crowd were shouting.

"It's hard, but you have to try and block it out because you have to get your full focus on your opponent."

Inverness Leisure plays host to the academy's show, which takes place on Saturday 22nd September.

Limited tables to seat 10 are still available, priced at £550, which include a buffet and drinks service. Tickets for this can be purchased by contacting 0784 996 1362.

Stadium seating is priced at £20 a ticket. These can be bought by calling (01463) 667500 (all tickets are subject to a £2.50 handling charge). A licensed bar will be provided courtesy of The Heathmount Hotel. Under-18s must be in the care of a responsible adult

Sarah Harper is just one of the home fighters looking to shine at Highland Boxing's Academy's first-ever show, which takes place in Inverness next month.

