

# FIGHTING TO BE AN OLYMPIAN ONE BOUT AT A TIME

Words by Monica McInnes



photo by Jason Maher at Enhance Image

Monica McInnes gets in the ring with local Wagga teen, Leroy Fisher to see what it takes to be an elite boxer. He might have the physique of a boxer, but if you think Leroy Fisher's reserved and quiet nature makes him an unlikely contender for the Australian Olympic Team in 2016, you could be mistaken.

Leroy Fisher, 19, started life in Wagga before moving to Western Australia when he was seven years old. When Leroy turned 16, he returned to Wagga Wagga and started boxing. While in Wagga his natural abilities to box shone and only a year after starting in the sport he had his first fight in Sydney. "He stopped the guy in the third round," Leroy's father, John Fisher, recounts.

Now, Leroy lives in Woolloongong and is under the guide of coach Jim Clabour at KMA boxing. And with 35 years under his belt training plenty of boxers, Jim is tasked with training Leroy to Olympic glory. "From all my years of experience, Leroy has a really good chance of winning Australia's first gold medal in boxing. He is only the second person I have trained with this potential," Jim explains.

Since he began training Leroy six months ago, Jim has seen a lot of improvement in his charge's game. "Leroy is easy to train – he listens and is a good student. I like to get my students to think and prepare mentally for a fight. You can have all the techniques, but mental toughness is paramount," he says.

Jim continues, "at the end of the day, it's up to Leroy how he survives in the ring, your brain is a very powerful thing in a fight, and I remain quiet as soon as the bell goes."

It's this solitary nature of the sport that attracted Leroy to

boxing. "I like how it's one on one and there is only one person to blame if you fail," Leroy explains.

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But Leroy hasn't had too much failure of late. Recently he won the New South Wales State Title for the Elite Men's 81-kilogram category and beating three-time Australian Champion and four-time State Champion Beau Lantry in just three rounds. It was one of the proudest moments in Leroy's career.

Winning bouts like this doesn't come without serious dedication and plenty of training. Leroy trains five hours a day, six days a week. It consists of strength and weights, cardio, boxing drills, sparring at various gyms, including Kostya Tszu's gym in Sydney, and lots of mental preparation.

Currently, Leroy is preparing for his next bout in February next year. It's the New South Wales Titles, which is one of two opportunities

for Leroy to show off his skills to the Olympic squad selectors.

Leroy Fisher is an unassuming and talented young boxer. Coupled with his old-world-gentlemanly boxing attributes, he is a great ambassador for Wagga Wagga, Australia and sport in general. Remember his name and cheer for Leroy at the 2016 Olympics, when Australia just might snatch its first Olympic gold medal in the sport of boxing.

*Victory: Leroy's first bout against Valcan Mertuyey in February 2012 at St Mary's Band Club in Sydney.*



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