



Denise Laghayi hopes to compete at the world championships in July.

Martial arts star no longer on defensive

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When Denise Laghayi took up taekwondo at the age of 5, her original objective was to learn it as a means of self defence.

Since that time, the 14-year-old Stouffville resident has made good use of what skills she's acquired in that martial arts discipline.

But not for her original intentions.

Rather, Laghayi has made good use of it through her appearance in various competitions.

And to date, she's fielded some pretty impressive results.

Competing in the Cadet-female light middleweight division, Laghayi had an impressive 2013 campaign by finishing first in the provincial championships.

That enabled her to qualify for the national championships in Vancouver where she proved her feat at the provincials was not an aberration after earning another first place finish.

In September, Laghayi made her debut on the international stage when she went to Queretaro, Mexico to represent Canada at the Pan-American Championships and finished a respectable fourth.

"I was originally eager to learn self defence," the Grade 8 Oscar Peterson Public School student recalled of her beginnings in the sport. "But when I started going more and more, that's when I realized I loved the sport."

Reflecting on the solid foundation she's established thus far in her budding martial arts career, Laghayi

was quick to credit a number of people.

"My parents, coach, friends and family have helped me become as successful as I am now," she said. "I'm very thankful for their support and help."

Training from Day 1 at Myung's Taekwondo Academy, Laghayi is a first degree black belt and will be testing for her second degree in June.

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rush I get during practices."*

But before doing that, she will go to the national championships in Toronto from May 15 to 18.

Looking ahead to her appearance in Montreal, Laghayi is confident she can make her presence felt.

"I've been training very hard and long for this tournament," she said.

For Laghayi, long hours represents being on the mat six days a week.

But putting in that time, she said is plenty of fun.

"I love taekwondo because it's a contact sport and it keeps you moving. Especially the adrenaline rush I get during practices," she said.

Laghayi also hopes to represent Canada at the Cadet World Championships in Asia in July.

That, she revealed, is her objective for this season.

Her supporters are looking for a sponsor to help send her to the event.

Peewees sweep AE title

The Stouffville peewee AE Clippers hoisted the York Simcoe League championship banner after defeating the Lakeshore League champion Uxbridge Stars twice in their two-game mini tournament last weekend.

Buoyed by a pair of goals

from Liam Sitlani and Mathieu Kovac, the Clippers won the first game over Uxbridge 6-1 Saturday. Michael Creeggan had a goal and an assist while Ryan Cusack scored the other Stouffville marker. Franco Minaudo earned one assist.

In the second game the following day, the Clippers received a two-goal effort from Nick Olidis in

a 3-1 win.

Mathieu Kovac rounded out the scoring for Stouffville while Bradon Smith and Nathan Tratnik each had one assist apiece.

Other team members were: Robert Hume, Mitchell Risto, Jack Valleau, Tim Arnold, Jack Boston, Chris Leinwand, Jacob Turney, Evan Farrell and Ethan Volpe.

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