

Working a triple shift: mother, nurse, boxer

Suburban welterweight's hometown professional debut set for St. Patrick's Day

By MICHAEL VIRTANEN
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ALBANY, N.Y.

Elizabeth Mooney is a critical care nurse, spending much of her time trying to get her patients back to health.

There is, however, another side to this suburban mother of two young boys: She wants to punch the daylights out of someone.

"When I'm in there boxing, I'm not thinking I should be careful whether to hurt them or try not to hurt them," she said.

Mooney is a 36-year-old welterweight who came to the sport late. She ran up a 14-5 amateur record in 18 months before turning pro two years ago. Her 3-2 record as a pro includes a knockout victory. Next week, on St. Patrick's Day, she makes her hometown debut as a professional.

"When I'm boxing I'm strictly in the mentality of a boxer. When I'm a nurse, I'm strictly in the mentality of a nurse," Mooney said.

"When I'm around the boys, I'm a mom. That is truly my No. 1 job."

Mooney works at Albany Medical Center Hospital, where she puts in 20 to 24 hours a week. She had been a swimmer, runner and high jumper at Albany High School, a rower in college and later a runner and triathlete.

"This is definitely different," she said.

After her first son was born eight years ago, she went to Rick



AP PHOTO

Elizabeth Mooney listens to her trainer at a gym in Delmar, N.Y., on Feb. 10. A critical care nurse, suburban wife and mother of two young boys, Mooney is

scheduled to make her hometown debut as a professional boxer on St. Patrick's Day in Albany, N.Y. The 36-year-old competes as a welterweight.

Sweeney's suburban gym for aerobic workouts. She returned to the gym after her second son was born two years later to get back in shape.

"And it kind of snowballed from there," she said.

Sweeney opened the gym in 1994. He has two female amateur

fighters and had one other pro, who quit after her first fight.

"A lot of times they get hit and they don't want to do it anymore," Sweeney said. It's the same, he added, with most guys.

Records show 10 women's professional fights in New York last year, including two won by Mooney

at Turning Stone Casino in Verona, according to BoxRec.com. The state's Athletic Commission said there are about 15 women with current professional licenses in New York.

The Women Boxing Archive Network ranks 144 contenders in 17 weight classes from straw-

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Elizabeth Mooney
mother, nurse and boxer
on her first hometown professional bout

weight to heavyweight. Many are Americans, including Laila Ali, the top-ranked super middleweight and daughter of Muhammad Ali.

"The first time you get in there to spar, you realize this person is punching you back. It's not just a big difference. It's shocking," Mooney said. "It takes like a big deep breath and a couple days of thinking, 'Is this what I want to pursue?'"

"I don't like to get hit. I try to avoid getting hit. But it's part of the game. I don't think I've been hurt in such a way that I've become fearful. I've been hit with punches that stung. And I think, 'I shouldn't have dropped my hands.'"

Sweeney said Mooney has better stamina than most boxers, with good footwork and an ability to slip punches.

When she fights, Mooney said she tries mentally to slow things down, to see and anticipate her opponent's movements and avoid getting hit. She doesn't worry about what damage her punches may inflict.

In her most recent fight, on Sept. 23 on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, Mooney knocked Iva Weston (10-4) out of the ring before losing a disputed 10-round split decision.

For her next bout, she's right at home at the Washington Avenue Armory. She faces Cristy Nickel (7-4, 4 KOs) over six rounds in a 150-pound fight.

Nickel of Augusta, Ga., is ranked seventh among junior middleweights.

"I'm used to being on the road and being an opponent," Mooney said. "I'm looking forward to having the support of people who have encouraged and supported me the last five years who haven't even seen me box."

Mooney's husband has no objections to her career in the ring. After all, he was the one who told her to go to the gym in the first place. As for her sons, they've been to the gym but haven't seen her fights.

"That'd be too distracting," she said. To them, "It's just something Mom does."

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