

BOXER GIRL

Aussie Laura Saperstein is preparing for her first professional bout, all the while maintaining her fight for boxing equality

WORDS JURIS GRANAY

It's ironic that the city where the first-ever female boxing event was held is now one of the hardest places to find a bout if you're female. Just ask Laura Saperstein.

The 36-year-old Australian will step into the ring for her first professional bout on Sunday in London, a year after stepping up from the amateur ranks.

If she had been a man, however, Saperstein would already have a few fights under her belt.

The property developer, a former corporate lawyer who graduated with first-class honours and practised law with a major international law firm in London, says her first foray into pugilism began five years ago when she attended a kick-boxing class in Camden.

"I felt like a complete idiot, I was embarrassed," she tells *TNT* at the London Boxing Academy gym in Tottenham.

"Guys are used to imposing themselves but it's different for girls. Once I threw a few punches, though, I was totally hooked. Something switched and it was like 'I was born to do this.'"

It took the 2005 female ABA lightweight champion six months to pluck up the courage to enter her first gym. After training for several months more, she decided

to spar England female boxing pioneer Jane Couch.

Couch was England's first professional female boxer, and she gave Saperstein an idea of what to expect.

"There were some tears and they weren't from Jane," she says. "I was a little bloodied but it was OK. I just wanted to box."

Her first amateur bout — against another Brit, Lyndsay Littlewood

— lasted all of one minute, with Saperstein the victor.

"I didn't know what to expect," Saperstein says. "I thought it was going to be something like sparring but she ran into the middle of the ring and started clobbering me non-stop."

"After a bit I thought to myself 'so that's how you want to play it' and fought back."

After her gym failed to secure

any further bouts, Saperstein broke all the rules by trying to organise her own amateur bouts. "The club gets you the fights but finding a club that will get you a fight is hard," she says. "So I started ringing up trying to find my own fights."

A limited pool of English female boxers proved a problem, but the main worry was the establishment's lack of interest

