



Eye of the Tigress: Alesia Graf is in preparation for her world title shot on December 21 at the Fraternity Club in Fairy Meadow. Picture: ADAM McLEOD

Graf risin' up to the challenge

By AGRON LATIFI

Wollongong is a long way from her native Belarus but for boxer Alesia Graf it is the place she needs to be to realise her dream of becoming a world champion once again.

For the past six months the two-time junior bantamweight world champion has trained under the guidance of University Recreation and Aquatic Centre (URAC) boxing trainer Lee Murray to boost her world title status.

Next Wednesday Graf gets a shot at a third world title when she faces Thailand boxer Jubjang Lookmakarmwan at the Fraternity Club in Fairy Meadow.

But it won't be all about the boxing in her first Wollongong fight.

"I want to make female boxing an important sport in my adopted town of Wollongong," she said.

Graf, who is known in boxing circles as "The Tigress", because of her tena-

cious disposition, is no stranger to hard knocks.

The Russian-born fighter was raised in a Belarus orphanage before moving to Germany to study in 2001.

It is in Germany that her love of boxing intensified.

In 2004 Graf won the bantamweight championship. A year later the 31-year-old won the junior bantamweight prize, which she held onto for six years.

After suffering only her second loss of her career in

losing the World Boxing Council super flyweight title late last year, she turned to Murray for help.

The boxing trainer believes Graf is ready to be a world champion again.

"Her strength is incredible and she is super fit. I'm confident she will do really well," Murray said.

Graf's manager Anja Gantner said: "The Tigress never gives up."

"I hope Wollongong will embrace this fight and support

Alesia who I believe become an important icon in Wollongong, raising profile of female boxing also the profile of Wollongong in international sporting circles," Gantner said.

Entertainment, dancing gladiators will also feature part of the fight night.

"We are looking for strikers to carry Alesia into boxing ring," Gantner said.

Tickets are available on Friday night, at the UOW Sports Centre or by phoning 0422 431 311.