



Women in sport

# Silver, gold not good enough for Meghan

Own Correspondent

**W**ith a new door opening as an Olympic dream beckons, karateka Meghan Booyens (above) admits she needs to raise the bar if she is to qualify for next year's Tokyo Games, but she's ready to give it everything she's got.

The martial art will be featured for the first time at the Games, joining four other new codes on the programme at the 2020 showpiece, but Booyens and her fellow South Africans will need to make the grade first if they hope to become pioneers for the fringe sport by qualifying for the showpiece.

Booyens, a sports scientist who works as a trainer and coach at Tuks, has been active on the global circuit this year.

Her 2019 international campaign, however, has included only one victory thus far and she admits she'll need more exposure and opportunities at the highest level if she is to book her place at the Games.

"The only way I can improve is to test myself against more experienced karateka continuously, which means I have to compete internationally," Booyens said this week.

"So far this year, I have been to competitions in Dubai, Istanbul and Shanghai, but it is not enough."

Booyens earned the bronze medal in the women's 68kg+ *kumite* division at the African Championships in Senegal in

2014, and after returning to the podium by finishing third at last year's continental championships in Rwanda, she is hoping for a better result in Gabrone next week.

Should she earn gold or silver at the 2019 African Championships, it would go a long way in boosting her Olympic qualifying ranking.

Though she has been battered along the way after taking up karate in her youth, with injuries including a broken toe and a torn shoulder, Booyens is as passionate as ever about her chosen path.

## 2 Bronze medals Booyens has earned at the African Karate Championships

And while she knows she needs to raise her game if she hopes to make the cut, Booyens is eager to join the first wave of Olympic participants in karate, and she believes she has what it takes to target a spot on South Africa's Olympic team.

"To become a world-class athlete, I have to push my limits every day and have developed incredible self discipline and commitment," said Booyens, a former African Games silver medallist.

"The problem is that silver or bronze medals just aren't good enough for me anymore. I want to be a champion."

