

New Brunswick's karate kid kicking for Canada

ROBERT WILLIAMS | Telegraph-Journal
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Meet New Brunswick's karate kid, Alexander Cumming.

The 15-year-old Quispamsis native is heading to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, later this month to represent Canada at the Junior 2018 Pan American Karate Championships.

And he's got a podium spot on his mind.

It will be Cumming's second trip to the championships, having travelled to Ecuador in 2016 when he was just 13. In that competition, he was given a month to lose 10 lbs., on a strict diet of white meat, vegetables and four litres a day of water.

"I was skin and bones."

And he finished fifth.

There's no massive weight loss this time around. He'll be competing in the cadet kumite 70-kilogram division.

A long process

It started when a classmate in school started telling then 8-year-old Cumming about karate, and he thought to himself, "that sounds really interesting."

His father, Michael, said Alexander was nervous, so he decided to join as well so they could do it together.

For Alexander, there was no looking back. For dad, an injury would end his karate career just months later.

"It just wasn't meant to be," Michael said with a laugh.

As Alexander progressed through the years, Michael said he always knew his son was good, but it all came into focus in 2013 when he really started showing his potential.

And it's been a whirlwind ever since.

His parent's one year-old car already has 30,000 km's on it, and until Cumming makes the senior national team, financial support is hard to come by.

"You have to make the effort to be able to get to those competitions," said Michael. "It is a lot of travelling, it is a lot of commitment, but you have to go where the competition is."



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Alexander Cumming will represent Team Canada in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at the Junior 2018 Pan American Karate Championships later in August. Photo: Robert Williams/ Telegraph-Journal



A [GoFundMe](#) for his trip to Rio has currently raised \$725 of its \$5,000 goal.

Karate as way of life

Before a fight, it's about getting warm and feeling loose, said Cumming. But once it starts, "it's all mental.

"You can't be nervous, you always have to be thinking about strategies -- maybe you're going to test your opponent and see how they'll react."

Karate is the art of finding a strategy on the fly, explained Cumming. It's about quickly figuring an opponents weakness and exposing it.

But outside the dojo, it's about much more than that, said Sensei Neil Pond.

"Karate is a martial art, it's not a sport as such, and that distinction is important," he said. "You'll learn about self-discipline and respect, and you'll develop a good work ethic."

As a parent, Michael said that's been the biggest difference he's seen in his son.

"The respect he has and the maturity level he gets from being a leader, that's what he really gets out of it."

And now, representing Canada for the second time, Cumming said karate's given him a goal to work toward, and an unwavering commitment to getting there.

Pond said right from the first day he walked into his dojo, he knew "this kid had something."

Karate will make its debut appearance at the Summer Olympics in 2020 in Tokyo, Japan. In 2024, Cumming will be turning 22.

"Ever since I found out it was going to be in, that's my goal -- the Olympics."

But first, Rio.