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Michele Boileau led the world

Michele Boileau, who became Mississauga's first female athlete of the year in 1974 on the strength of her world-class performances in international judo competition, won't have anything to do with the sport today.

"To be quite honest, I have no interest in the sport any more," she said in a recent interview.

These days, long hours spent on the job as assistant manager at Vic Tanny's in Rexdale take up most of her time and, Boileau says, there are other ways to stay in shape.

But it was the physical benefits of the sport that got her interested in the mainly male world of judo nearly 12 years ago.

what are they doing now?

"Most women start for the same reasons I did — just basically for self-defence. Second of all for conditioning."

By 1971, though, she had become interested in competition.

Entering at the local level, she soon qualified for a series of provincial and Canada-wide tournaments that led her by the end of 1974 to a string of three first-place wins in international tournaments — the top forum for women's competition, since only men are allowed to compete in judo at the Olympics.

The hat trick started in Arkansas, where she won the North American judo title in her weight division, followed by the November, 1974, win at the British Open tournament that earned her the unofficial world championship.

She capped the year with a first-place finish at the Spanish International tournament the next month.

The 17-year-old champ was later honored as top female athlete of the year at Mississauga's first annual Sports Celebrities Dinner and Awards Night the following March.

Over the next few years there would be further success in competition, including three second-place British Open finishes, and at least two more award nominations — as Canada's female athlete of the year in 1975, and a second nomination for the Mississauga award in 1976.

By Boileau's estimate, she had weathered more than 50 tournaments in Ontario, Canada, the United States and Europe by the time she left the sport in 1978.

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