

The Heart of a Champion

Cinco Ranch High School student Kayla De Leon displays incredible talent in jiu-jitsu and wrestling

Written by Holly Leger | Photography by Sara Isola

The art of jiu-jitsu is a time-honored and long-standing tradition. For 15-year-old Cinco Ranch High School (CRHS) student Kayla De Leon, it is a passion; one that has earned her over 50 medals and the prestigious title of four-time teen jiu-jitsu world champion. "I love competition and I love to win," De Leon says with a grin.

Becoming a Fighter

Anthony De Leon originally enrolled his two oldest daughters in jiu-jitsu to learn self-defense. Both girls excelled in the sport, also competing in high school wrestling at CRHS where they made a name for themselves at the state level. All the while, De Leon watched eager to start her own legacy.

A four-time jiu-jitsu world champion, De Leon is at the top of her game. In her first year of wrestling in 2015, De Leon placed second at the Texas state wrestling championship - the first freshman girl to do so in CRHS history.

De Leon credits her sisters for much of her successes, as they have helped her develop her grappling technique over the years. "I've kind of combined their styles and put it in my own," she explains. "It's nice to have them on the side supporting me, because I know they've helped make me the fighter that I am today."

Power of Extra

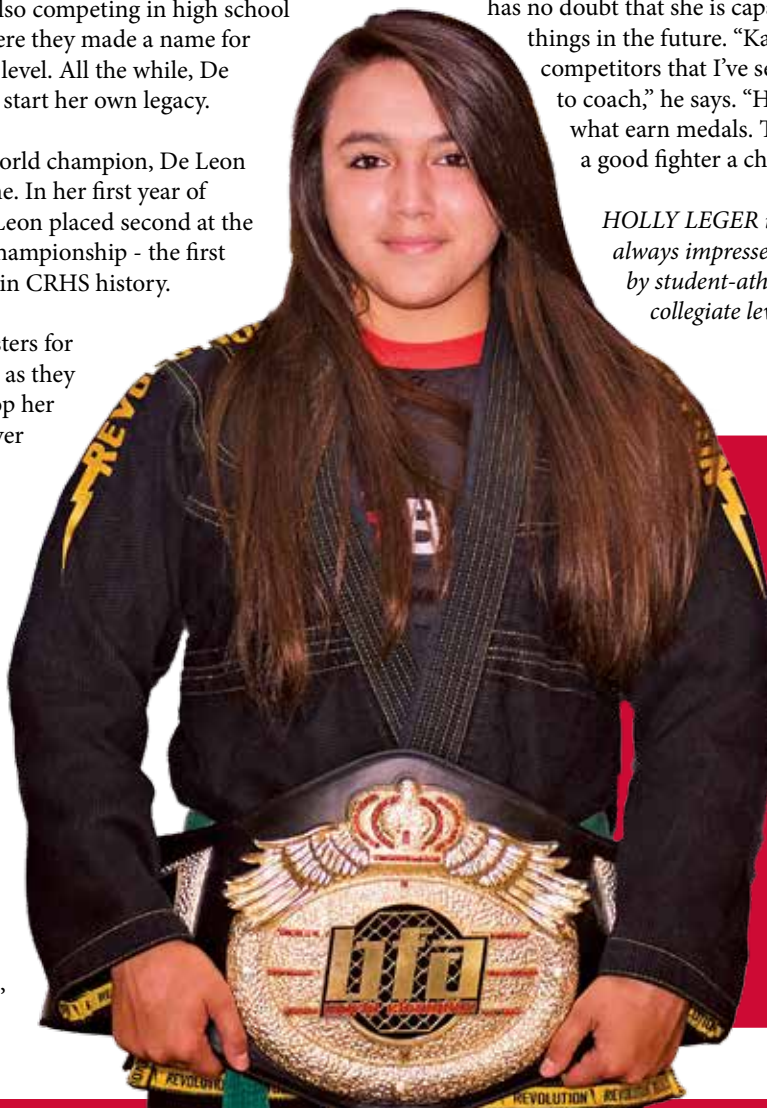
Once De Leon is 18, she will be eligible to compete in the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation World Championships,

a title which she hopes to hold one day. Until then, De Leon is competing in as many jiu-jitsu tournaments as she can, often fighting against women in older age brackets and with higher belts in order to improve her game.

"Everything that you do helps maintain being a champion and being the top," De Leon says. "All the extra work that I put in helps me maintain my skills and continue improving."

De Leon's Revolution Dojo instructor Jeff Messina, says he has no doubt that she is capable of accomplishing great things in the future. "Kayla is one of the toughest competitors that I've seen and had the fortune to coach," he says. "Her heart and tenacity are what earn medals. That's what's going to make a good fighter a champion." KM

HOLLY LEGER is a freelance writer who is always impressed with the devotion shown by student-athletes at the high school and collegiate levels.



Wow-worthy Accolades

- Four-time BFA Teen Jiu-Jitsu World Champion
- American Grappling Federation Blue/Purple Invitational Women's Champion
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