

State honour KO's promising Cairns boxer

By Laine Clark

IT was probably be the only time Cairns boxer Kenneth Dalton was happy to be floored.

Attending the recent Queensland Amateur Boxing Association annual awards night in Brisbane "just to see mates", Dalton was gob-smacked when his name was read out for the "most potential" trophy.

"I was not expecting to win anything. I just went there to see mates. When my name was called out I almost fell over," Dalton said.

"This is something I have wanted to win since I started boxing. There is nothing better than acknowledgment

from your peers." Then again Dalton, who returned to Cairns on Thursday, should be used to pleasant surprises by now.

The award completes a dream 1997 for Dalton who has a happy knack of coming home from major tournaments with both smiles and medals.

This year Dalton claimed his second State belt when he won the Queensland Amateur Boxing Union 81kg junior lightweight title in September following Arafura Games gold in May and a Golden Gloves

crown in June. His record was only soured by a first elimination bout loss at the national titles in November to Atlanta Olympian and eventual champion Justin Crawford in a split decision.

But Dalton has already hatched a plan to rectify the situation.

A member of the Yorkeys Knob-based Sea Eagles Boxing Club under trainer Gavan James, Dalton arrived back in Cairns keen to launch a bold bid to earn Oceania and possibly Commonwealth Games honours at Crawford's expense.

Dalton will launch his game plan in

January when he challenges Victorian champion Paul Murdoch for the Oceania Games boxing squad's No.2 junior lightweight spot in Melbourne.

If successful, Dalton will then contest the Oceania Games in Wellington in March where a showdown for gold with Crawford looks inevitable.

And from there, who knows, according to Dalton.

"If I make it to the Oceania Games I don't think they (Commonwealth selectors) can ignore me if I knock him (Crawford) out which I think I can — they couldn't argue with that,"

Dalton said. "But the main goal is Sydney 2000. You can't tell me that Justin (Crawford) can hold me out until then."

Dalton has spent the last month at his mother Dorothy's Gold Coast home training with professional welterweight Julian Holland and Commonwealth Games bronze medalist Richard Rowles.

The stint followed a three-week training camp at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra.

A date for Dalton's January bout with Murdoch has not yet been finalised.