

## Heta late than never for boxing debut

Louise Heta is basking in the glory of a 2-0 start to her boxing career.

The Werribee-trained fighter decided to step into the ring for the first time as a 36-year-old and has made an immediate impression.

Heta believes her greatest achievement is not measured in wins and losses, but the courage she displayed to take the plunge and have a go after years of putting it off.

"It's been a long time coming," Heta said.

"To get to a point mentally where I was ready to fight is actually more of an achievement than the physical side.

"It's been over 10 years of me going on and off with boxing and not being ready, then thinking I can do it and that little inner critic telling me I can't do it."

Heta's debut came in the Master Fit-Life Boxing Cup in Ferntree Gully.

With her husband and trainer Kim Heta in her corner, the light welterweight boxer

recorded a win over Donna Hensler. It was the next fight in an amateur bout against Tennille MacNamara that Heta truly announced her arrival.

Not only did Heta win, but she won on technical knockout after the referee called a premature halt to the fight.

Heta leads a busy life as a sports dietician and group fitness instructor at A-Team Fitness and Boxing, and a mother to three children, Kwai, 5, Kaino 3, and stepson Kodi, 15, but that is not stopping her.

"It's really important for people who are our age to make the time to train and set yourself some kind of health and fitness goal," Heta said.

"What it gives you in return, the cost of time versus the benefit of how it helps you as an individual, it helps you be better in every way."

Lance Jenkinson



Louise Heta has made a super start to her boxing career. (Damjan Janevski)

## Young star is a major hit

By Lance Jenkinson

All roads lead to the United States for Newport Rams rising baseball star Nikau Pouaka-Grego.

The ultimate dream for the young infielder is to make it to the Major League.

He is so far on the right track to fulfilling that quest in what has been an impressive junior career.

Pouaka-Grego represented Australia at the recent U15 Baseball World Cup in Panama.

He is just 13 years old, playing against opponents who were more experienced and further ahead in their physical development.

It did not deter Pouaka-Grego, who thrived on the big stage, featuring in some big wins with the Australian team over the likes of South Africa, China and Germany.

It was an unforgettable experience for the enthusiastic youngster, who played at second base.

"It was awesome," he said. "I got to play against some of the top prospects from around the world and I got to see how other countries play baseball.

"It's an honour to represent my country.

"You try to do everybody proud."

Pouaka-Grego's success at second base was linked to building a good rapport with the shortstop. The pair of infielders were on the same wave length more often than not.

"Me and our shortstop were close, we were tight," he said.

"It was easy to work out with each other on the field.

"We pulled off some nice double plays and the game becomes easier when you're up the middle with someone you can work with."

Pouaka-Grego had a fine tournament in the batters box.

He finished with an average of .400 with four hits from 10 at bats, while also drawing an impressive five base on balls and had two stolen bases. "I hit pretty good," Pouaka-Grego said.

"I got a few hit by pitches and some walks, so I got on base a lot for the players behind me to drive me in."

The chance to work with some great coaches was another highlight for Pouaka-Grego.

He learnt so much from head coach Andrew Kyle and his assistants Mark Pettitt, Brian Murphy and Grant Weir.

"Everybody learnt something different about their own game," Pouaka-Grego said. "We've got some new things we've got to improve on.

"They were awesome to be around."

It was certainly not Pouaka-Grego's first experience in the green and gold.

The Williamstown High School student has featured in the under 12 national team in the past three world series played in the US.



Newport Rams baseballer Nikau Pouaka-Grego has ambitions to play in the major leagues.

(Marco De Luca)

While in the US, he has taken the chance to see seven major league baseball games, perhaps picturing himself on the field in the future.

Last month, Pouaka-Grego strutted his stuff in front of the baseball talent scouts at a Major League Baseball invitational tournament in Lismore. "There was a bunch of scouts there and some ABL coaches," Pouaka-Grego said.

"It was good to showcase our skills and see how everybody else played."

Pouaka-Grego has his sights set on Victorian under-age representation in the short term, while further down the track he is keen to

secure a sporting scholarship at a college in the US.

Pouaka-Grego is the October nominee for the Don Deeble Rising Star award.

The award, hosted by the Sunshine Western Region Sports Club and *Star Weekly*, recognises young athletes from the western suburbs who have achieved outstanding results at state and/or national levels.

Pouaka-Grego will receive \$1000, donated by the Yarraville Club Cricket Club, and other prizes to assist him in achieving his sporting goals.



### IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ No surprises with the crowning of the best and fairest awards at Williamstown and Werribee VFL clubs last week. The Seagulls' much decorated midfielder Michael Gibbons added a Gerry Callahan medal to his trophy cabinet, while Sam Collins confirmed his status as one of the best outside the AFL, winning the Bruce Montgomery trophy. Both should be in different colours in 2019 as they certainly warrant a spot on an AFL list. They won't be the only state league players in the spotlight, with Werribee's Josh Corbett highly regarded and almost certain to be picked up and Footscray's Will Hayes emerging as a possible recruit. It is hard to gauge what AFL clubs are looking for but it is good to see the blinkers are off and VFL football is getting the respect it deserves as a strong competition developing players who are ready to go in the AFL.

■ The 2018 grand final did not turn out to be the fairytale ending to the season Brody Mihocek would have liked, but what a great year he had. The former Port Melbourne and Werribee VFL player got his opportunity and made the most of it, becoming a vital cog in the Collingwood tilt at the flag. In recent years Kane Lambert, Liam Picken and Dale Morris have tasted AFL premiership success after doing the hard yards at VFL level. Talk about the future of the VFL is always fuelled by the desire of the AFL clubs and their reserves agenda. Maybe it is time to look at it from a different perspective and take into account the role played by the five stand-alone VFL clubs and the players emerging there.

■ Football has a few presentation nights to finish the season, with the WRFL Barry Priest medal to be presented this week, but cricket and racing now take the spotlight. Werribee's international horse centre will be the focus of a lot of attention, with the overseas horses again expected to be prominent in the big races of the spring. Werribee Football Club has a pre Cox Plate lunch at Chirnsides by the River @ Avalon Airport Oval featuring Matt Hill, Troy Corstens, Greg Carpenter and Brad Spicer on Thursday, October 25 (bookings on 9741 6688). The Werribee Racing Club will host the International Breakfast with the Stars on Thursday, November 1 with Melbourne Cup-winning jockey Mick Kinnane and a racing panel (bookings on 97411800).

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