

# Champ savours greatest lift

Brendan Cormick

THE media's failure to acknowledge his greatness — coupled with a promise to his three-year-old son — spurred Aleksan Karapetyan yesterday to back-to-back gold in the men's 94kg class.

The Manchester gold medalist, annoyed that he had seen nothing of himself in the newspapers or on television as the defending champion, dominated a competition that had Victorian Simon Heffernan win silver.

Karapetyan promised his son, Garek, he would win gold — the boy telling his father nothing less would do.

The Armenian-born lifter then took his son onto the podium for the medal presentation.

The big man was enraged by the fact he had been largely overlooked in favour of other team members in the media.

"I have been in Canberra training for two months in camp and I cannot see my photos, not anything special in the papers," Karapetyan said. "Last Commonwealth champion and no pictures. This is not right."

Weakened by an elbow injury three months ago, Karapetyan grudgingly accepted the advice of team coach Luke Borreggine to not attempt a record lift of 168kg in the snatch element of the competition.

"It was not my best. I wanted to go for the record but coach said he didn't want me to lift any more (than 165kg). Maybe next time," he said.

Karapetyan, who came to Australia eight years ago, declared he would be back to defend his crown in 2010 in New Delhi.

Heffernan was fuelled by a different motivation.

For the Melbourne school-teacher, it was a case of all's well that ends well, but the politics of sport will chase him out of weightlifting. Heffernan was embroiled in a bitter selection row this year, threatening to mount a legal challenge to maintain the spot he earned at selection trials in December.

"I qualified at the trials and then they didn't pick the team for two months," Heffernan said. "They (the Australian Weightlifting Federation) tried to change the qualifying criteria. I should have been able to prepare for two months.

"If they'd spoken to me earlier

I'm not. I still haven't been spoken to about it. It was shabby. I didn't deserve that, nobody does. My results indicated I should have been in the team. I'll remember who spoke to me, (who told me) to keep my chin up and who didn't.

"All organisations need communication to be effective.

"The fact nobody spoke to me for two months... they're better than that."

Heffernan is the rebel of the team, breaking away from the Victorian base at the Mermat Centre in Hawthorn to become part of Phoenix Weightlifting, overseen by dual Commonwealth Games gold medallist Robert Kabbas. "I respect Robert and I wanted to be looked after," he said yesterday.

Heffernan, who captured three bronze medals in Kuala Lumpur in 1998, largely funded his own preparation for these Games, another sore point.

He was the only member of the team to miss out on a grant from the Australian Sports Commission.

"I heard I might get one now. Some got upwards of \$20,000," he said.

"I would have liked to have taken a year off work to prepare, but it all worked out for the better in the end."

Heffernan wanted to be outspoken about the perceived drug culture of the sport in this country but was hamstrung by the agreement he signed to compete at the Games. He said he hoped the AWF would say something in defence of the weightlifting team soon.

"I think it is insulting. We don't deserve it. It's baseless," Heffernan said. "I sleep well at night. As a competitor, all we can do is our job and I think we've done that pretty well. I have an opinion on how it could all be turned around, but I can't say."

Last night, Australia's Deborah Lovely won a gold medal in the women's 75kg event. Lovely was equal with Nauru's Sheba Deireragea after the snatch, but outlifted her by 6kg in the clean and jerk. Deireragea won silver, with South Africa's Babalwa Ndleleni taking bronze.

Lovely won a silver medal in the same event at the Manchester Games in 2002. The woman who won gold in Manchester, India's Pujari Shailaja, had been the favourite to defend her title until she was disqualified after



Guitar man: Heffernan celebrates a successful lift

