



THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD

BY ROBERT DRANE PHOTOS BY IAN KENNIS

WEIGHTLIFTING DOESN'T LIFT ITS GAME, THE NEXT THING HE REJECTS WILL BE THE SPORT ITSELF.

Heffernan will claim gold even if he doesn't deserve to. A big man, Noonan sits in the wings, a front-row position ensuring he's able to meticulously record each contestant's statistics and results and set up his small camera. "I don't trust anyone's statistics but my own," he says.

Noonan was the national director of the Australian Weightlifting Federation (AWF) from 1990 to '93. Sitting as far away as possible from the sport's officials, all of whom look spry and spiffy in their suits and ties, he's a large, melancholic chunk of a man - disfranchised and

only present because of his love for the sport. He recalls organising an event in '86 and apologising to the AWF because "only" 800 people turned up. Compared to this, that year was a pilgrimage.

For these national championships, the Australian gold medallist from the Commonwealth Games, Alex Karapetyan, is at home ... in Armenia. If this had been deemed an "important" event, the AWF would have paid his passage here. A gold medal of some description would have to be at stake. These medals are far from gold. What's one worth? Heffernan, bad ▶