

# THRUST INTO THE LIMELIGHT

By DAVID REED

AUSTRALIA claimed its second weightlifting gold medal yesterday and added a silver for good measure in the men's 94 kilogram category at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre.

Defending champion Aleksan Karapetyan never looked in trouble in streaking away with gold by 18kg, while animated home-town favourite Simon Heffernan rose to the occasion to take silver and confirm his claim of career-best form.

But Heffernan — who missed Manchester through injury and qualified yet wasn't picked for Athens — hinted afterwards that yesterday may have been his last event.

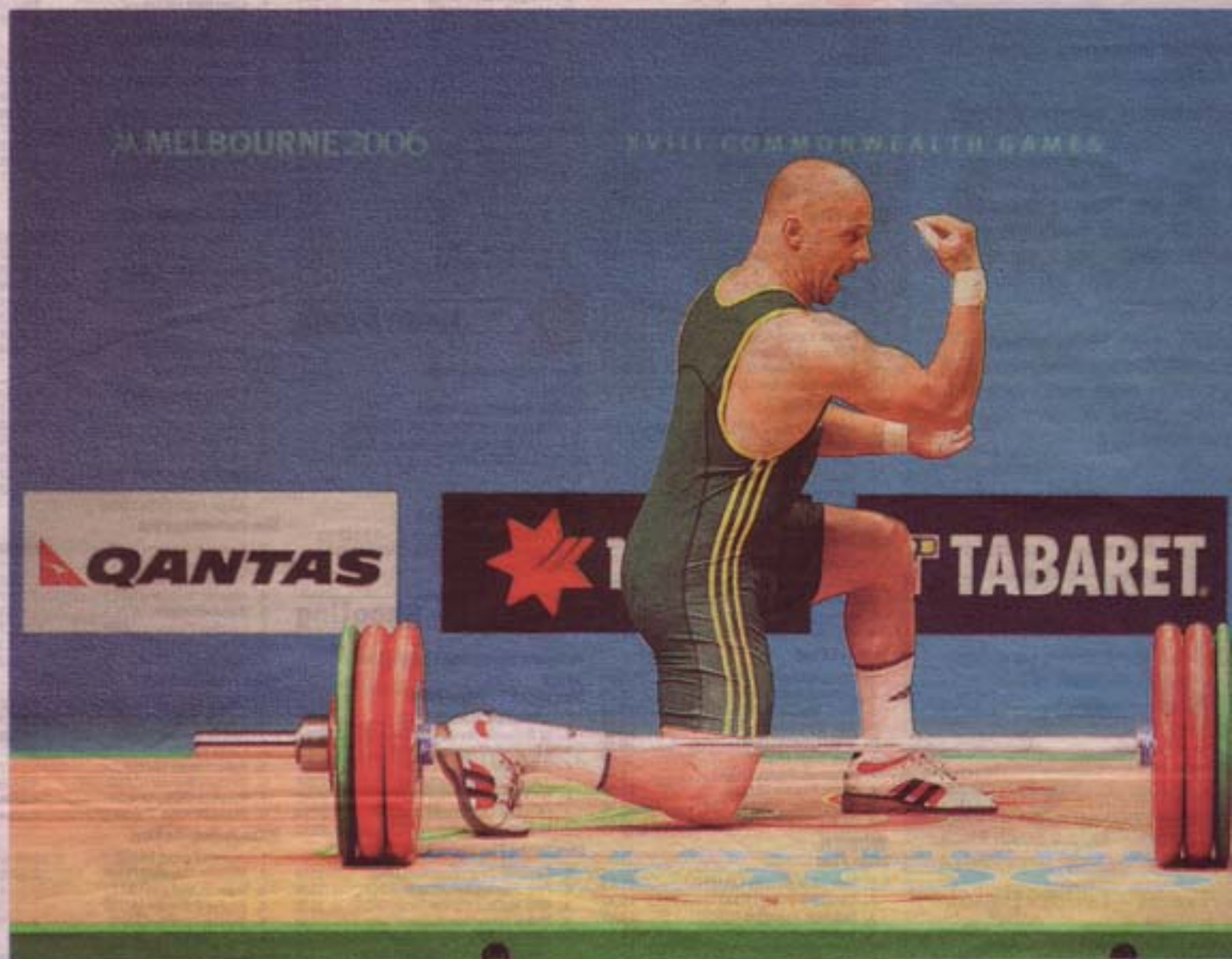
Scotsman Tommy Yule took bronze. Highly fancied New Zealander Grant Cavit collapsed during his second attempt at the clean and jerk and was unable to complete his next lift. Cavit, who is a doctor, addressed the bar but realised he was in no state to attempt the lift.

The only drama in Karapetyan's victory came when the former Armenian angrily threw down the bar after successfully lifting 165 kilograms on his final snatch lift, two kilograms below his Games record set in Manchester.

Karapetyan confirmed that he'd had a disagreement with his coach before the lift. "I wanted to break 170 kilograms but my coach doesn't want me to, I don't know why... you ask him," Karapetyan said.

Heffernan, a well-spoken English and Italian school-teacher from Kew, used the Melbourne crowd to his advantage. He only missed one lift, his final clean-and-jerk attempt at 190 kilograms, as he fed on the fever-pitch atmosphere in the venue.

"I was flat as a tack for that one, I had lifted a lot of weight, but I could hear my crazy aunt and crazy uncle,



Simon Heffernan goes into celebration mode after a lift on the way to winning a silver medal yesterday.

nutty sister and all the mad cousins. I have never heard anything like it," he said of his support team that included both parents, five siblings and 30 cousins.

Heffernan might have been the silver medallist yesterday but there was no doubt he was the superstar of the show.

It started after his successful 147kg snatch lift, when he showed that all the time in the gym hadn't been wasted, and unveiled his own version of Brett Lee's "chainsaw" celebration after having taken a wicket.

But that was just the entree, after his next successful lift Heffernan gave fans the full repertoire — the chainsaw, a double wind-

mill, a disco groin thrust and finally the Lleyton Hewitt "c'mon" yell, accompanied by the vischt sign.

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SIMON HEFFERNAN

"The groin thrust was just wrong — I wouldn't do the groin thrust again," the

30-year-old Heffernan said. "But Lleyton, I think about Lleyton a bit. I don't like how he carries on but I respect that he lives here and he is a good husband and all of that. He doesn't live overseas and he pays his taxes. But Brett Lee is my favourite."

Less demonstrative was Armenian-born Karapetyan but his lifting yesterday was awesome.

The 35-year-old's snatch of 165kg blew away the opposition. It gave him a commanding 14kg lead after the snatch section, which he stretched further in the clean and jerk.

Karapetyan said he was likely to be back to defend his crown in four years, and encouraged Heffernan to do

the same. "If no injuries maybe I will be back in 2010 — I am happy to give my country gold medal," Karapetyan said.

He took his two-year-old son Garik on to the podium to collect his gold medal. "I promised my son to get the gold," he said.

Australia's Deborah Lovely also won gold after a tight battle in the women's 75-kilogram event last night.

Lovely was equal with Nauru's Sheba Deireragea after the snatch, but outlifted her by six kilograms in the clean and jerk to take the title. Deireragea won silver, with South Africa's Babalwa Ndleleni taking bronze. Lovely won silver in the same event at Manchester.