



Passion play: Simon Heffernan is determined to excel in his last major competition. Picture: DAVID KAPERNICK

Hometown lift strengthens resolve

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Michael Horan

team to compete in front of his hometown crowd, he has endured financial hardship, neglected his teaching career and withstood galling internal politics within the sport to achieve what is likely to be his last crack at glory.

"It will be worth it on the day, but there has been more than one day when I've asked the question if it is worth it," Heffernan said this week.

"I'm in great nick, so I'm not complaining. I've never been in better shape than I am now. I'm going to have a

good day (at the Games). I can feel it. I've had a lot of PBs over the year, so I'm as ready as I can be."

Heffernan, who is coached by 1984 Olympic silver medalist and dual Commonwealth gold winner Robbie Kabbas, is ranked third in the Commonwealth behind naturalised teammate Alex Karapetyn and Kiwi Grant Cavit.

He knows he will have to be at his absolute peak on the day to get on the medal dais, but there is no doubt in his mind that is where he is headed.

"There's not much between me and first. There is no pressure on me. I'm a better competitor than trainer, and I'll go in looking to win," Heffernan said.

For the first time in his life, Heffernan will be the sentimental favourite at a major competition, a factor he is sure carries some weight.

"It's satisfying, rewarding and something I'm really looking forward to. It will be worth 10kg, having that home-town support."

Australia's team of eight men and seven women is expected to win up to 10 medals.

WEIGHTLIFTER Simon Heffernan knows all about being up for a challenge. And in what is likely to be his last hurrah in the sport he loves, no one will have a more passionate crack at these Games than the Melburnian.

Eight years after winning three bronze medals at the 1998 Games in Kuala Lumpur, the 30-year-old will go into the 94kg class competition fitter than he has ever been.

Heffernan missed Manchester four years ago because of a hernia operation.

To be part of the Australian