Pocket rocket is shooting for the stars



By JAMIE PANDARAM

THEY call her the "pocket rocket", and 129cm gymnastics star Dena Christodolou is hurtling towards stardom at a furi-

The 12-year-old of Padstow has reached Level 10 after be-

ing in Level Four just two years ago.
Dena also won an International Level 10 gold medal in the beam event at the Reach for The Stars competition last December, her first major tournament at that level.

"That was the first medal I've ever won," Dena said. "I hang it on my bed.

"I was very shocked. I thought I wouldn't get anything, the

coaches told us not to expect anything because it was our first In fact, Dena had only been competing at Level 10 for five

months before winning the gold. "I hope for the best and try my hardest," she said.

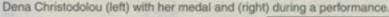
Hard indeed. Dena trains for 35 hours each week, on top of

attending school and studying.
This year she starts high school, although the selective college Westfields Sports High will make allowances for her to train and study effectively.

The youngster has also set herself the toughest goal of all:

"I want to get to the Olympics in 2008."

By then she will only be 16, but judging by her rapid progress the Beijing Games is well within her grasp.





Hussein h

By JAMIE PANDARAM

IT'S a no-win situation for Hussein Hussein, but he must face another mediocre opponent because once again he has been screwed by boxing poli-

Hussein (pictured right) was hoping to start 2005 with a bang - a world title fight with World Boxing Organisation champion Omar Narvaez had been planned for this month.

But Narvaez's management placed such ridiculous options on the fight contract, Hussein would have virtually been owned by the Argentinean if he had won the title.

Now Hussein, who was married at the end of last year and has since moved into a home in Bankstown, will fight little-known Filipino Federico Catubay at Panthers Leagues Club on February 6.

"I'm not supposed to

be fighting this guy, I'm supposed to be fighting for a world title," Hussein said.

"I didn't have a Christ-mas or New Year's break, I spent all my time training for a world title

'And then to have it pulled out like that is very disappointing."

Hussein and his manager Jeff Fenech rejected the offer from Narvaez, because it was unreasonable in every sense.

Narvaez's camp wanted full television rights, and options on Hussein's next three fights. They wanted to choose who Hussein fought as cham-

"Nobody would sign that," Hussein, 29, said.

So now he is pitted against an opponent who would fall into the category fast becoming known as "Thai cab driv-



health for a free flight to Australia and a few hundred dollars.

If Hussein beats Catubay, which is more than likely, it will be said that he has just added another "bum" to his list of vic-

But what can he do? Every time Hussein

comes close to a title shot he seems to get fur-

"I just have to stay as busy as I can," he said. "I want to have about

and be a mandatory chal-

That is how you get the champions to fight you - it has to be mandatory, you can't negotiate with them.

"Champs like Narvaez

are running scared." Hussein has fought for one world title, the WBC featherweight crown against Thailand's Pongsaklek Wonjongkam in Bangkok in November 2003

Hussein lost by deciavenge it this year.



Premiership Round 8 SATURDAY NIGHT - 29ND JANUARY

7.00pm Penrith Nepean United v Blacktown City Demons Cook Park (St Marys) Wilson St, St Marys

7.00pm Central Coast United v Bonnyrigg White Eagles Central Coast Stadium Dane Drive, Gosford

7.00pm St George Saints v A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers St George Stadium 88 Bestic St, Rockdale

7.00pm Manly United FC v Sydney Crescent Star Cromer Park South Creek Rd, Dee Why

7.00pm Marconi Stallions v Wollongong Wolves Marconi Stadium Marconi Plaza, Bossley Park

SUNDAY NIGHT - 30TH JANUARY



Further details from:

9740 6259

razorbacks.com.au or

6.00pm Sydney Olympic v Blue Devils Oki Jubilee Stadium Jubilee St, Kograh 6.00pm Parramatta Eagles v Bankstown City Lions

Melita Stadium Everley Rd, South Granvill 6.00pm Sydney United v Rockdale City Suns Sydney United Sports Centre 223 Edensor Road, Edensor Park

er" - fighters from Asia five fights this year. sion - his only profes-sional loss in 27 fights who have a minuscule "If I have one or two chance of victory but who willingly risk their fights hopefully I can get and he's desperate to back up to number one to reach the playoffs. ACTION INDOOR SPORTS BANKSTOWN **54 HOSKINS AVE, BANKSTOWN**

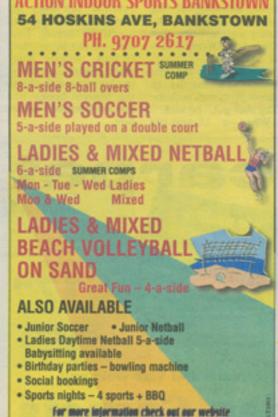


· BANKSTOWN Lions drew 1-1 with Penrith Nepean United in the NSW Premier League match last weekend to move back up to fourth spot with 12 points. Last season's Golden Boot winner Matw Borg made his much anticipated return for Bankstown. While Borg failed to trouble the scorers, teammate George Nohra hit a 20-yard screamer in the eighth minute to cancel out an earlier strike by Penrith's Luke Tomich.

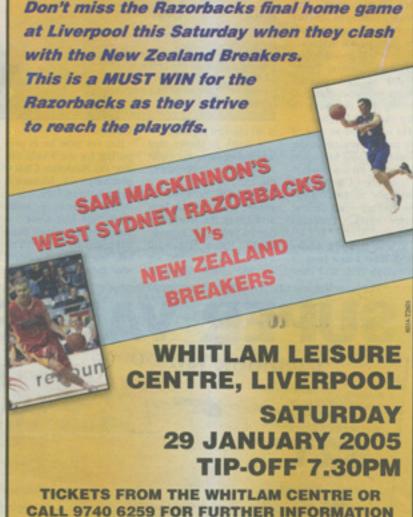
* THE West Sydney Razorbacks are at long odds to make this year's National Basketball League finals series after losing their fifth match in a row last Saturday. The Pigs must win their remaining matches and hope for other results to go their way if they are to make the play-offs. Last Friday an undermanned Pigs lost to Townsville 119-96, and the next night were beaten 107-96 by Cairns Taipans.

* THE hard work of popular groundsman Warwick Starr and all Bankstown cricket club officials is the reason Bankstown Oval was chosen to hold the Pura Cup match between NSW and Queensland from this Friday, so well done team. Tickets for the match, NSW's 1000th, are \$5 for adults and \$1 for children.





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