



This Kidd's got talent



LEARNING the hard way ... Todd Kidd raises a healthy sweat in the gym at Griffith University.

Picture: David Kapernick

Todd hauls himself up from canvas to make Olympics

TODD Kidd doesn't make excuses. The Caboolture boxer takes his setbacks squarely on the chin, just as he keeps his successes in perspective.

Nobody gets a saloon passage to the Olympics, but Kidd earned his berth to Beijing the hard way. When light-welterweight Kidd beat Samoa's Vaiee Sasi Sasulu to take the gold medal at the Oceania Games last week he had reason to celebrate.

After a shock defeat at the national titles in Brisbane in December, Kidd had to reassess his Olympic campaign.

There were issues the 23-year-old did not mention in the interview for this story ... that he'd travelled to a two-month camp in the US last year weakened after a bout of glandular fever, and that he'd fought at the world championships in November with a broken nose.

Then he had to drag himself off the canvas after losing his national title to make an Australian B team to contest last week's Oceania Games.

"You get a lot of doubts in your head when you come back from the world championships to the Australia titles and lose a fight you think you should have won," he said. "It was a lethargic performance by me and all credit to the fighter who beat me."

That boxer was South Australian Dave Biddle, and the margin in the decision was one point ... Kidd didn't mention that either.

Kidd made some hard decisions, leaving the AIS in Canberra and returning to his club coach Richard Ford in Brisbane.

"I freshened up and talked to my coach a lot about how I should be approaching my fights," he said. "I thought things might have gone a bit stale and just worked with Richard in Brisbane."

Kidd fought his way into the Australian B team with a 24-4 points win over Biddle, his conqueror at the nationals.

That gave him one last throw of the

dice, which he grabbed at the Oceania Games.

"You have to keep setting little goals that keep you going ... if you miss out on something you've worked at for years you have to have something to keep you ticking over," he said.

Kidd came agonisingly close to making the team for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, stumbling at the last hurdle when beaten in the gold medal final at the Oceania Games.

"To finally make these Olympics after everything you go through is unbelievable," he said. "I've fought at world championships and international tournaments, but nothing compares with the Olympics."

Kidd, who rates as his best performance his win in the light-welterweight division at the Commonwealth Cup in Liverpool last year, said the quality of competition at Beijing would be extremely tough.

"Boxing is such a big sport worldwide and to get to the Olympics every boxer

has to come through a tough qualifying process. You've got the very best from Europe, Africa and the Americas," he said.

"There is no easy fight. We're a bit isolated in Australia ... we need to travel extensively to get experience of fighting and training with the best."

The preparation of Australia's nine-man boxing team before Beijing has yet to be confirmed, but a six-week European campaign with tournaments in Spain, Germany, Croatia and the Czech Republic is planned.

"Fortunately, the AIS has the funding to send us on those trips," he said. "Boxing is a true amateur sport and the individuals can't afford to compete without financial support. But that's what the Olympics is all about."

Kidd was playing junior rugby league in Caboolture when he first went to the local boxing gym for a look.

"I was a little fat kid playing footy and fell in love with boxing when I was 15 years old," he said.