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Happy as Harry

By Mikayla Van Loon

He may have just been a "normal kid from Lilydale" before the Olympics but now Harry Garside, 24, has made a name for himself as the first Australian boxer to bring home a medal since 1988.

Hoping to achieve greatness since the age of seven, Garside's goal was to win gold and although he fell short of reaching that dream, there's no doubt he has managed to capture the country's attention.

In what was an amateur versus professional match up against boxing's world number one Andy Cruz, Garside held his own, showing his passion and determination throughout every round of his lightweight semi final on Friday afternoon.

Unable to out-beat and out-move the two time world champion, Garside pocketed a bronze medal at his first Olympic Games and made history as the first Australian to win a medal in 33 years.

Although not the result Garside was after, he was proud to have been able to fight a legend of the league in Cruz.

"Obviously bronze is still good but the gold medal is what I wanted but now hopefully I've inspired the next generation of boxers and young athletes leading into the 2032 games and lets hope it is our most successful games ever," he told Channel 7.

Inspired by the 2004 Olympics when Grant Hackett raced in the 1500 metre final, Garside had been working towards his own Olympic campaign since that moment.

"I was seven years old and I started boxing when I was nine but that moment in 2004, watching my whole family captivated by that moment, I didn't fully understand what was going on, I was only seven but I just remember

that moment so clearly going like wow this is so amazing and electric," he said.

"So moments like that have formed this unbelievable patriotism and just desire to achieve something on the big stage."

But even though he made it to the big stage, the humble boy from Lilydale said that's still just how he feels.

"I just feel like that normal kid from Lilydale to be honest, it's pretty crazy that I'm here. It hasn't really sunk in but I did this for Australia and I know Australia is proud of me that I got a bronze," Garside said.

For the people in Harry Garside's life, including his ballet teacher Dianne Harrison from Elance Adult Ballet School, it is clear that he doesn't hold the qualities of a stereotypical boxer.

"He's really got a nice shyness about him, and I didn't pick him as coming from a big sporting background, because he was very unassuming, he's very grounded, and he's really so delightful," Ms Harrison said.

"I know we typically associate boxing with roughness, toughness, aggression and that's not how Harry presents at all. But when he was in the studio, he was a wonderful, wonderful student who just applied himself with such intensity and as a teacher you couldn't ask for more."

Ms Harrison said she believes the structure and discipline of ballet were certainly elements that appealed to Garside because it was so similar to his training in the ring.

"That sense of artistry and musicality was such a dramatic contrast to what he normally does but supported by that structure and discipline made it feel both relatable but also really so removed from his boxing world," she said.

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