

HENLEY

Youth defies odds

TOP GYMNAST WINS GOLD AFTER INJURY

Dan Jervis-Bardy

AS GRACE Popplestone lay in hospital, her arm severely broken, the young gymnast feared she would never compete again.

Eighteen months later, the Henley High student is a national champion.

Grace, 12, won a gold medal in the vault competition at the National Club Gymnastics Championships in Geelong last month.

"I'm so proud of what I have overcome," Grace, 12, says.

"It feels like all the hard work has paid off and I can't wait to continue to improve at future championships."

Grace, who started gymnastics as a four-year-old, fractured her radius and ulna bones after misjudging a landing while training in July 2013.

Surgery to insert a metal rod into her arm sidelined her for more than 12 months.

"It was really scary when



Henley High student Grace Popplestone, 12, has recovered from a broken arm to win a gold medal in the vault at the National Club Gymnastics Championships. Picture: STEPHEN LAFFER

it happened – I really worried that I wouldn't be able to get back," Grace says.

"But after a few days, I had a big think about it, and I decided that I would be focused and determined."

Gymnastics SA coach

Crystal Yeo says Grace's remarkable recovery is a testament to her hard work and self-belief.

"An injury of that nature can be quite traumatic for anyone, let alone a 12-year-old gymnast competing at an

elite level. We thought it would be a real struggle for her to recover physically and mentally, so for her to have achieved what she has in such a short period of time is pretty special," Ms Yeo says.