URRBRAE

Determined Grace jumps back on to take gold

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 Urrbrae athlete is a national champion.

Grace (pictured), 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 said.

"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 at the age of 4, 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 it happened – I really worried that I wouldn't be able to get back," she said.

"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 said Grace's recovery was 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," Ms Yeo said.

"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."

Now fully recovered, Grace trains 30 hours a week with Gymnastics SA's Junior Elite Talent Squad.

She will travel to next year's Olympics in Rio de Janeiro to watch gymnastics events and hopes to one day represent Australia at an international competition.

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