

Hi ho silver for Deane

by martin turner

DEANE Whitehead is the Lone Ranger of modern pentathlon in WA.

She is the State's only competitor in the sport, which incorporates air pistol, epee fencing, showjumping, swimming and running.

And despite only taking part for about six months, the 12-year-old Iona Presentation College student from Wembley Downs is already very good at it, having won a silver medal in the Women's Youth section at the Australian Championships in Melbourne last month.

Not even an asthma attack during the 3km cross-country race, which required medication after the race, could put her off course.

It was the kind of performance that would have made Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, proud.

He started the sport, which had its debut at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, believing it would be a test of a person's moral qualities as well as their physical resources and skills, to

create a well-rounded athlete.

Deane has certainly become a well-rounded individual in the pursuit of her sport, managing up to 16 hours of training a week, along with 90 minutes of homework a night.

Already a good swimmer and runner, but getting bored just doing laps, she tried fencing.

UWA Club fencer Ben Peden noticed her talent and the seed of the idea of taking up modern pentathlon was planted.

Deane's mother, Cathy, said her daughter was loving the sport so far. Even when a training session might be spoilt by rain, as happened the morning of our interview, Deane opted to do a 4km walk.

"She likes what she does and she's happy doing it," Mrs Whitehead said.

Deane said she found the competition in Melbourne a bit confusing at first, but as the youngest competitor, she had a lot of support. "I felt like a little sister. They were pretty good to me."

She would enjoy having others in the sport in WA.

"It would be more competitive than just having me doing it," Deane said.



Modern pentathlon 'Lone Ranger' Deane Whitehead (12) practises showjumping.