

Bec's master stroke

Diagnosed with a debilitating disease, bodybuilder fights back

By Mick McDonald

FOR Bec Humphreys the decision to return to bodybuilding was reasonably straight forward.

"I was diagnosed with Parkinson's last year," the 40-year-old Chatham High school teacher explained.

"So I wanted a challenge. I wanted to show that I could overcome adversity."

The fact that she'd just turned 40 provided her with another incentive. She could compete in the Masters division.

Bec's been in two competitions. She finished second at Newcastle and then won at the Central Coast a fortnight ago. Both times she was in the Masters Women's Figure division.

She'd been off the bodybuilding scene since 2008.

"I competed in another federation," Bec said.

However a young family made it difficult to commit to training and competition so she gave it away.

Then in February last year she was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Bec admits to being devastated when she received the news.

Life, she admits, hasn't always been easy since.

"There's no cure for it (Parkinson's)," she said.

"But it is what it is. I've learnt to deal with it - there's no cure but I'm on medication."

That was another attraction that bodybuilding provided.

"I could put my body to the test," she said.

"And I wanted to show by children that I could achieve something difficult."

Her training regimen would be taxing enough for anyone in perfect health.

"I've been training three hours

a day six days a week," she said.

"I had two weight sessions - one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Then I mixed that with cardio classes."

However, she said her medication makes her sleepy and she had to factor that in her preparation.

And Bec faced a further hurdle when it came to competition.

"Because of the disease my body shakes," she explained.

"And that not good for when I am being judged."

She admits to having 'good days and bad days' with her disease.

"It's okay when I'm medicated," she said.

"But some days I can't even hold a cup of coffee."

This is also stress related and Bec said performing in front of judges is a stressful exercise.

But she managed all this at both competitions and is proud of the fact that she improved enough on the second occasion to grab first place. This would have also qualified her to compete in the nationals later this month in Sydney.

"But I decided against that," she said.

"I didn't want to keep putting pressure on my body with all the training required for another three weeks. And I wanted to enjoy some time with the kids."

With her mission accomplished Bec's now happy to go back into retirement. She honestly has no idea if she will ever make a comeback. That'll depend on how she can manage the disease.

"You never say no," she said.

However, she hopes that what she's achieved will show people with similar problems that life doesn't have to come to a grinding halt.

"Maybe it will inspire someone," Bec said.

"That would be good."



Putting her body to the test: Chatham High School teacher, Bec Humphreys competing in the Masters Women's Figure division.