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Georgia Welsch at the IKMF event in Antequera with her medal and certificate for the 16kg kettlebell lifting event. INSET: Georgia in action at Antequera with trainer Don Grant watching on.

Kettlebell calling



CALIVIL student Georgia Welsch is having a well-earned rest after returning from Spain where she won two gold medals at the world championships of the International Kettlebell Marathon Federation (IKMF).

The 15-year-old won the 12kg one-arm long cycle full marathon in her age group - doing 798 repetitions in 60 minutes with the heavy implement - and the 16kg half marathon, performing 344 reps in 30 minutes.

Georgia was introduced to the unusual sport at her school, East Loddon College, by teacher Hayley Lethlean.

"I've been lifting a kettlebell for three years now," Georgia said.

"One of the teachers was doing lunchtime classes and she told my mum, who told me. I had a go, and went back every lunch time I could, and it evolved from there. I just liked doing it. It was something different."

Georgia's coach, Don Grant, from Rock Hard Training in Bendigo, described Georgia, a junior world champion, as "very good" and "very determined".

"These girls from the country are amazing. I guess they breed them tough out there in

Loddon. They're off the farm, they're not afraid of hard work," Grant said.

"It's all about being strong in the mind."

According to Mr Grant, who is the Australian IKMF representative, kettlebell lifting has been popularised by UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) fighters - who appreciate its value in developing endurance - and is one of the fastest growing sports in the world.

The kettlebell is a traditional farming tool used for weighing wheat and grain in Russia which since WWII has become a standard piece of sporting equipment there, Mr Grant said, and the sport is much more popular in Russia and eastern European countries.

Mr Grant said seventy-five to eighty per cent of his kettlebell lifting clients are female, because "girls appreciate functional strength more than guys do."

"Guys tend to be into the body building culture," he said. "They want a quick fix."

The 2018 competition in Antequera, in southern Spain, was Georgia's third international championship appearance, the teenager having travelled to Italy and Spain

in previous years to compete.

"I loved all the different traditions in Spain and seeing everything and tasting the food. We did have quite a few tapas meals," she said.

Despite her dazzling performance, Georgia said she had fallen short of her personal goals.

"I was happy with my results but I do wish I got a few more reps in both the lifts," she said. "My personal best was 360 for the half marathon and in the 12kg I was hoping to hit 800."

But there was no hint of disappointment from coach Don Grant.

"The world's her oyster," he said. "How far she wants to go is her call."

Next year's IKMF championships will be in Lodz, Poland, and twelve-year-old Keira Lawry from East Loddon College is hoping to be there as well.

