

**I**t's a sunny Monday in The Domain. Girls are moaning, boys are sweaty. Music is pumping and punches are being thrown. Everyone is having the time of their life. These guys are in a hard training session with the Bootcamp Whisperer, Daniel Thornton.

Thornton, 32, dreamt of this lifestyle when he was 22, training in his makeshift gym in the garage of his parent's house in Bourke. He went from 55kgs to 85kgs.

What prompted this passion for weight training?

Thornton's school years were tough. He attended four different schools as his parents moved from Bourke to Sydney and then back to Bourke again. "They were important years of your life, where you become who you are. I'd made all my friends and then we just upped and moved and I had to start fresh. I missed out on crucial years when you grow closer to your friends."

Happier times revolved around sport. "Dad took me to all the football games and I loved playing football. The country is great for a kid because there's a heap to do. As you get older, it's just a small country town with nothing to do!"

This became a problem for Thornton, when at 17, a year in to his panel beating apprenticeship, he got in to the drug scene. It was an escape from reality. Growing up with a father who lacked self-esteem, so too did Thornton. Being a small town, it wasn't long before Thornton was jobless, dubbed "a bad egg."

He moved to Queensland to live with friends. He completed his apprenticeship and got back on track.

However when his friends moved away he found himself alone. He was tempted again to escape reality and recalls "freaking out" with hallucinations like ads on TV. "It was like when they show a kid in the gutter, his friends saying they just don't know him anymore; that was me." A call to his mum and he was back in Bourke. He remembers visits to the psychiatrist and for eight months, he struggled to get out of bed. He decided that his life was over.

His interest in weight training lead him to start reading magazines on the subject. And today he is grateful to them for pulling him out of his nightmare.

A panel beating job for the 2000 Olympics prompted his move to Sydney, but a car accident ended Thornton's career. During his two years of physiotherapy he entertained the dream he had

as a kid, to pursue personal training as a career. “Me and my mates used to say, ‘How awesome would it be to train someone and get paid for it!’”

Six years on, he’s established himself as a motivating, professional personal trainer, working alongside Shannan Ponton from *The Biggest Loser*, and Laurie Daley, one of the nation’s finest rugby league players and his childhood idol.

Thornton’s most exciting moment so far has been pulling on the boxing gloves and going a round with Daley, as well as training his wife, Michelle.

Stuart Troy first met Thornton at bootcamp, “Just when you think you've given your all, he squeezes more out of you. He knows when to push you, when to encourage you, and when to ease off,” he says.

Thornton teaches his clients his own life motto: “Give life everything you’ve got and take yourself out of your comfort zone!”

Troy recalls how one hellish morning became a valuable lesson.

“It was 6am, still dark, and we were running around the muddy oval in the pouring rain, holding tyres above our heads! It was so fun.”

Thornton’s passion is helping people change their lives. He’s thrilled they want to train with him because they’re inspired by his story.

“I’m amazed at how far I’ve come; I could never have imagined it. It’s awesome to know that I’ve helped them achieve their goals,” he says.