

Port's Special Olympians return with truckload of medals



Did us proud: Special Olympics athletes, from left, Kylie Barefoot, Glen Ball, Joshua Southgate, Rachael O'Raw, Aidan Roughley, Christine Wheeler, Jennifer Davis and Adam Smith. Pics: MATT McLENNAN

THERE was plenty of extra weight in Port Macquarie's high achieving Special Olympics contingent's baggage when they flew back into town on the weekend, thanks to a big medal haul.

The Hastings athletes came back from Melbourne with an incredible nine gold, three silver and six bronze medals hanging around their necks, and they were only too happy to show them off at a morning tea at the Hope Shop Cafe on Monday.

Aidan Roughley starred, winning three gold medals in ten pin bowling.

Glen Ball won golds and a silver in ten pin.

Rachael O'Raw won gold and silver in the ten pin, while Kylie Barefoot also brought home gold. Bennett Powell added to the haul with a gold and two bronze medals in athletics, and Josh Southgate bagged silver and bronze in ten pin.

Adam Smith finished with bronze in the ten pin, and Haley Brown and Jennifer Davis got bronze in the basketball.

Forster athlete Jason Holley won two ten pin gold and a silver.

There were plenty of top 10 finishes, and the team's athletics coach Rod Nugent was pleased as punch with the results.

"These guys have done outstanding in their representation and coming home with medals," he said.

The smiles on the competitors' faces made the training and sacrifice well worth it for athletes and coaches.

"That's what the Special Olympics is all about," Nugent said. Win, lose or draw, Nugent said the Hastings athletes were to be commended.

"They represented themselves and the Mid-North Coast with absolute pride," he said. Nugent's 19-strong athletics team won a whopping 70 medals in Victoria. That's 42 per cent of all the medals given out.

Anyone who won a gold in Melbourne is eligible for selection in the Australian team to compete at the 2015 World Summer Games in Los Angeles, California.

Nugent will be the head coach of that side, and had his fingers crossed some Hastings competitors would be on the plane with him.

"Selection is going to be really hard [for the committee]," he said.