

Our region, our people



MAIN: D'Con Groat-Rohde dreams of playing professional basketball and at 205cm, has a frame that should serve him well in realising that ambition. **INSET:** D'Con created this computer from scratch and it includes two brightly coloured coolant towers. **Pictures:** MEAGAN MCGREGOR

D'Con's got big plans

MEAGAN MCGREGOR

WHEN D'Con Groat-Rohde was born he measured 54 centimetres, a fair size for a healthy baby boy but not abnormal.

But as he grew, he grew more than most and now at the age of 15 stands at 205 centimetres tall or 6'9" in the old measure.

Towering above mum Somma, D'Con (pronounced Deacon) was taken to a geneticist where the family discovered he had a rare condition that resulted in him being born with an extra Y chromosome.

People affected are usually very tall and many experience severe acne during adolescence.

In the past there were many misconceptions about this disease.

It was sometimes called the super-male disease because men with this syndrome were thought to be overly-aggressive and lacking in empathy.

Recent studies have shown that this is not the case.

D'Con presents quite literally as a gentle giant.

He is polite, though shy and is developing some amazing skills that with the right mentorship, could lead him to his dream — the pinnacle of professional basketball.

He recently had the chance to attend a basketball camp in Melbourne where he met Maryborough-born NBA star Matthew Dellavedova.

Dellavedova, who won a championship alongside LeBron James at the Cleveland Cavaliers, is preparing for his second season with the Milwaukee Bucks and hosted the camp while back home in Australia during the NBA offseason.

The 193-centimetre point guard took one look at D'Con and said "Wow, you're tall".

But it has not always been plain sailing for the boy who outgrows his shoes every few months, suffers severe growing pains and has scarring similar to lash marks across his back as his skin struggled to keep up with his massive bone growth.

"We had difficulty at school because he had outgrown another set of school shoes before the year had ended and his sizing was so big the next pair needed to be imported from the US," Somma said.

"But they're expensive and I was worried if I bought them he wouldn't fit after the summer holidays.

“ I've always liked computers and I like gaming, so I decided I wanted to build a gaming computer ”

D'Con Groat-Rohde

"He'd also outgrown the standard-sized school uniforms and his back would hurt sitting at regular height tables.

"So he was really struggling in the main school system."

Somma then decided to enrol him in TAFE where he is currently completing his Certificate III in General Education.

"The turnaround has been remarkable," Somma said.

"He's just a whole different boy. Before, he didn't want to go to

school, but now he is very happy, his confidence has grown and it's just a better fit for him."

Although Somma was delighted to see the turnaround in her son's performance and happiness she had no idea just what he was capable of.

As part of his TAFE studies D'Con was exploring his interest in computers.

"I've always liked computers and I like gaming, so I decided I wanted to build a gaming computer," he said.

Chances for Children stepped in and were able to support D'Con to achieve his goal.

In a swirl of stats he reels off the impressive capabilities of the system, but one look at it immediately earmarks it as no ordinary computer.

D'Con's computer was built from scratch researching and ordering parts online. It has a dual loop cooling system, GTS 1080 Ti graphics card, 1.7 770 100k processor and 32GB of RAM.

It resembles a Chinese New Year celebration with all the bells and whistles, and its glass tower fully exposes the inner workings with the main attraction being two brightly coloured coolant towers.

Somma said she had no idea he was capable of creating a computer let alone such a high tech one.

"It took him about three days from start to finish and when he turned it on the first time it started up straight away," she said.

"I was completely amazed, I actually had a tear in my eye."

Somma's priority right now is finding somebody to help develop D'Con's potential.

"As a child he didn't really like sport, he was just into his com-

puters and I didn't understand it," she said. "It's only in recent times he's developed a real passion for basketball and because he hasn't been playing since a small boy he still needs work on his basic skills.

"The problem is, his height means he needs almost specialised teaching because his stride is twice the size as other kids his age.

"When he takes two steps for a lay up he finds himself under the backboard and he can already slam dunk."

When asked how he feels about his height D'Con smiled and said "I like it, it's good and hopefully it will help me to achieve my dream."

"My mum encourages me to do what I love, but we don't really know how to make it to the next level," he said.

Somma agreed that she wasn't sure how to get him the next level of support.

"A lot of the opportunities for him such as one-on-one coaching are in Melbourne and we don't really know where to start," she said.

If basketball doesn't work out for D'Con his future still remains neon bright. He hopes to pursue a career in IT repairing, building and selling computers and his ultimate goal would be to own his own gaming production company.

Based upon his first attempt, there is little doubt he has the skill and innovation to break into the computer industry.

D'Con will complete his studies this year and hopes to get a job with a local computer where he can further his knowledge.

"I don't really mind what it is, I'd try anything as long as I had a chance to work with computers," he said.

Weekly weather forecast



| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Today | Possible shower developing | | Min 4, Max 18 |
| Tomorrow | Partly cloudy | | Min 3, Max 16 |
| Friday | Partly cloudy | | Min 1, Max 16 |
| Saturday | Possible shower | | Min 3, Max 16 |
| Sunday | Partly cloudy | | Min 3, Max 15 |
| Monday | Morning frost | | Min 1, Max 16 |

V/Line times

PLEASE NOTE: Trains are required to travel slower as a matter of safety on days with a temperature of 32 degrees or above. Passengers could be delayed for up to 20 minutes. Other delays can occur from time to time, please check vline.com.au or call 1800 800 007 for up to date information.

SWAN HILL TO MELBOURNE — TRAIN SERVICES
MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep SH 7.10am dep Bgo 9.22am arr Melb 11.34am. Dep SH 12.43pm dep Bgo 2.56pm arr Melb 5.05pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep SH 7.10am dep Bgo 9.23am arr Melb 11.30am. Dep SH 1.30pm dep Bgo 3.44pm arr Melb 5.44pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep SH 7.10am dep Bgo 9.23am arr Melb 11.30am. Dep SH 4.23pm dep Bgo 6.36pm arr Melb 8.42pm.

SWAN HILL TO MELBOURNE COACH/TRAIN SERVICES
MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep SH 9.00am dep Bgo 12.30pm arr Melb 2.23pm. Dep SH 10.50am arr Bgo 1.07pm dep Bgo 1.36pm arr Melb 3.22pm. **FRIDAY ONLY:** Dep SH 3.25pm arr Bgo 6.20pm dep Bgo 6.47pm arr Melb 8.44pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep SH 10.00am dep Bgo 12.32pm arr Melb 2.25pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep SH 1.05pm dep Bgo 3.37pm arr Melb 5.23pm.

MELBOURNE TO SWAN HILL — TRAIN SERVICES
MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep Melb 7.41am dep Bgo 10.01am arr SH 12.10pm. Dep Melb 6.23pm dep Bgo 8.39pm arr SH 10.51pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep Melb 8.35am dep Bgo 10.45am arr SH 12.54pm. Dep Melb 6.35pm dep Bgo 8.43pm arr SH 10.55pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep Melb 8.35am dep Bgo 10.45am arr SH 12.54pm. Dep Melb 6.35pm dep Bgo 8.43pm arr SH 10.55pm.

MELBOURNE TO SWAN HILL — COACH/TRAIN SERVICES
MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep Melb 10.14am dep Bgo 12.20pm arr SH 2.39pm. Dep Melb 1.14pm dep Bgo 3.30pm arr SH 6.40pm. **FRIDAY ONLY:** Dep Melb 7.02pm dep Bgo 9.05pm arr SH 11.59pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep Melb 10.38am dep Bgo 12.30pm arr SH 2.48pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep Melb 10.38am dep Bgo 12.30pm arr SH 2.48pm.

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EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY DIAL 000

Swan Hill Police

(03) 5036 1600

Swan Hill Medical Group

(03) 5033 1711

Swan Hill District Health

(03) 5033 9300

Lifeline

131 114

Kids' Help Line

1800 551 800

Mensline Australia

1300 789 978

Suicide Line

1300 651 251

Beyond Blue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Domestic Violence Hotline

1800 800 098