



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 17, 2020

Toua aims for Olympic history

Dika Toua will make Olympic history again if she qualifies to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in July this year.

The first time she entered the record books was at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 where she became the first female weightlifter to lift at the Olympics when women's weightlifting competition was contested for the first time at the Olympic Games.

Toua is now on the verge of another historical sporting moment for Team PNG as she pursues her fifth appearance at the Olympics. She will become the first female weightlifter in the world to compete at the Olympics five times.

"It is very overwhelming for me, to be the first female weightlifter on the Olympic platform and now going to the Olympics for the fifth time is something I want to do, so I am working hard towards it and staying positive and really looking forward to it," she said.

Toua has been highly competitive in her last four Olympic appearance finishing 10th place in Sydney 2000 in the 48kg division, 6th in Athens in 2004, 8th in Beijing in 2008 and 12th place in London in the 53kg division.

While her main focus now is to qualify, Toua remains confident in her experience and is also not ruling out the chance of an Olympic medal.

Getting to Tokyo will not be easy for Toua as she needs to participate in a series of international events to qualify, similar to other weightlifters around the world.

The rules of the International Weightlifting Federation to qualify, is to compete at six international events in an 18-month time from the Olympics. This meant that in the first six months – October 2018 to April 2019, Dika needed to compete twice and she did.

She competed at the Egats Cup in Thailand and also the Arafura Games in Australia. In the second six months, she competed at the Pacific Games and the Oceania Championships in Samoa and the World Championships in Thailand in the month of September.

Dika now has two more events to go and that is the Australian Open Championships in Canberra on February 28 to March 1, and the second is the Oceania Championships in Nauru on April 21 to 26.

Currently she is well ahead in the continental stream in the 49kg category.

Accompanying Toua on this quest is Morea Baru who will be competing in the men's 61kg division. Baru made his Olympic debut at the Rio Games in 2016 where he finished sixth in his division.

Like Toua, he also aims to make another Olympic appearance and also has had to compete in the same events as Dika, in order to qualify. Baru collected enough points from his recent events surpassing all other lifters in Oceania to guarantee his place however, he needs these two events to seal it.

Both lifters are currently training at the Oceania Weightlifting Institute in New Caledonia in preparation for these upcoming events.

President of the PNG Weightlifting Federation, Sir John Dawanincura met with Toua and other PNG weightlifters in Port Moresby early this month and outlined their requirements to make the final team for the Oceania Championships.

He stressed the importance for the athletes to meet their weight requirements for their respective categories while also maintaining their fitness and training programmes.

"The final selection will be based on their bodyweight and performance. Whoever does not meet the requirements will not make the final team to these events," said Sir John.

He said performance of the athletes will be based on their consistency over the last 12 months and everyone must work hard to maintain their form.

The PNG Weightlifting Federation has shared this information with all officials and weightlifting clubs and encourages regular communication and feedback from them.

Sir John also appealed to families, especially parents of young athletes to support them in their preparations by watching their food, rest times and knowing their whereabouts at all times.

"We have a goal and we all must work towards achieving that goal for all our athletes. Our success depends on effective communication and consultation between the athletes, clubs and the families," said Sir John.

END.

###