

Sport

BEACH TENNIS

Rapid rise for beach tennis star

By Steven Milne

WHAT a meteoric rise it's been on the beach tennis court for West Footscray resident Dean Metcher.

The 37 year old discovered the sport — described as a combination of tennis, beach volleyball and badminton — quite by accident back at the Port Melbourne beach in February.

"I just fell in love with the game and it took off from there," he said.

Metcher is now preparing to strut his stuff for Australia at the world championships in Italy in August.

"I'm rapt. To play for country in anything is something special. It wouldn't matter if it was tiddly winks, which I think [late Australian media mogul] Kerry Packer said.

"It's so true. I'm over the moon."

He acknowledges competition will be tough.

"Even though it's pretty new in Australia, it's huge over there [Europe] — there are players who are almost professional.

"I've seen some DVDs of competitions over there in the past few years. They take it very seriously. It's absolutely full on. Everybody wants to win."

A handy social tennis player,



Metcher was introduced to the sport by close friend Fiona, who is a tennis coach. "She told me about it and I went down with her to have a look," he said.

"It's a great fun sport. It keeps you very fit. Your reflexes become a lot sharper."

Games are played on a beach volleyball court with the net raised to the height of a badminton game.

Players use fibreglass racquets and a tennis ball with slightly lower pressure than the outdoor variety.

"The ball doesn't hit the ground — you keep it alive all the time," Metcher said.

He paid tribute to local beach tennis guru Paul Mapley.

"He's really trying to put the sport on the map," he said.

The construction worker is keen to organise some sponsorship to help him meet the \$5000



Ace: Dean Metcher will represent Australia at the world championships of beach tennis in Italy in August.

Picture: Nigel Clements

cost of his trip of a lifetime. Inquiries: 0409957805.

■ Metcher isn't new to these

sporting pages. He was a member of Parkside's 1996 first division premiership in the Western

Region Football League (formerly Footscray District Football League). He played on a wing as

the Magpies beat Yarraville in a memorable grand final at the Yarraville Oval.