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A GENTLE MAN

Australian Story goes behind-the-scenes with boxing's Mr Nice Guy Jeff Horn and his meteoric rise from bullied teen to world champion.

The unknown teacher shot to international fame in July when he beat Manny Pacquiao, an 11-times world champion with \$500 million in earnings to his name.

It was an unexpected takedown from an unlikely opponent.

In a brutal, bloody sport, Jeff Horn is a polite, gentle man who loves nothing more than playing board games with friends or honing his magic tricks on nieces and nephews.

"I honestly think there's not a violent bone in his body," says his biographer, Grantlee Kieza. "He says that he doesn't want to hurt people."

Jeff, 29, learned to box in his first year out of school. His soft nature had made him the target of bullies and he wanted to learn basic self-defence to protect himself and his high school sweetheart – now wife – Jo, when they were out on the town.

His natural sporting ability and a strong competitive streak were noticed by boxing trainer Glenn Rushton, a martial arts master described as a cross between Chuck Norris and Anthony Robbins.

When Jeff had only 17 professional fights under his belt, Rushton believed the former PE teacher was ready to take on Pacquiao.

"Everyone wants to fight Manny Pacquiao," Rushton says. "It's their dream fight, which for most people it turns into a nightmare."

Few people thought Jeff was up to the challenge and even Jeff admits he had his doubts.

"I would lay down in bed at night just about to go to sleep and see him punching me," Jeff says. "And I'd be like, 'no, no, no, no! I can't think about losing and getting flogged in there.'"

In a stadium in front of 50,000 Brisbane spectators and a huge worldwide television audience, Horn put his reputation and physical safety on the line and gave it his all.

“He was just getting punched in his head and I haven’t seen him like that in a fight before and I was like, ‘please throw in the towel, this is so scary’,” his wife Jo says.

In one of the greatest upsets in the sport, Horn won the world championship belt off Pacquiao.

Now with a new baby on the way, Jeff Horn is looking to prove he’s more than a one-hit wonder as he prepares to defend his title and cement his reputation as a legend of the sport.

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