

# Jayde Mitchell: From 'beachball with eyes' to middleweight contender



*Brendan Bradford*

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Four years ago, Jayde Mitchell couldn't look less like a middleweight boxing contender if he tried.

With a self-confessed fondness for beers and burgers and a successful concreting business to run, Mitchell was a solid 130kgs.

His days as a promising amateur were well behind him.

A professional boxing debut was out of the question, surely?

Right?

Well, not for a bloke like J-Mitch. Well into his 20s by then, he decided to "flick the switch" and give boxing another crack.

“Three years ago I made the decision to come back and I actually broke both my feet and ankles – compound fractures through both – when I got up to go for my first 4am run at 130 kilos,” Mitchell told *Sporting News*.

“I was practically a beach-ball with eyes at one stage there.

“I just had this belief that I’d always get back into boxing, so if I wanted to have another beer or another hamburger, or another block of chocolate, I would because I knew I’d get the weight off.

“It was my passion and I’d gone so far as an amateur and I’d always wanted to go pro since I was a little kid.

“I just kept telling myself I’d get back into it.”

After such a long time out, Mitchell knew he didn’t have time to slowly work his way back up the ranks.



So he jumped straight in the deep end, taking on guys no one else wanted a bar of and fighting tough opponents everyone thought he'd lose to.

But he won. And continued winning. It was never supposed to happen.

He won state and regional titles. He knocked blokes out. He went to the US and earned a paying gig as Miguel Cotto's sparring partner. Pretty soon, people started taking notice.

And he did all this while putting in a full week running his successful concreting business in Melbourne.

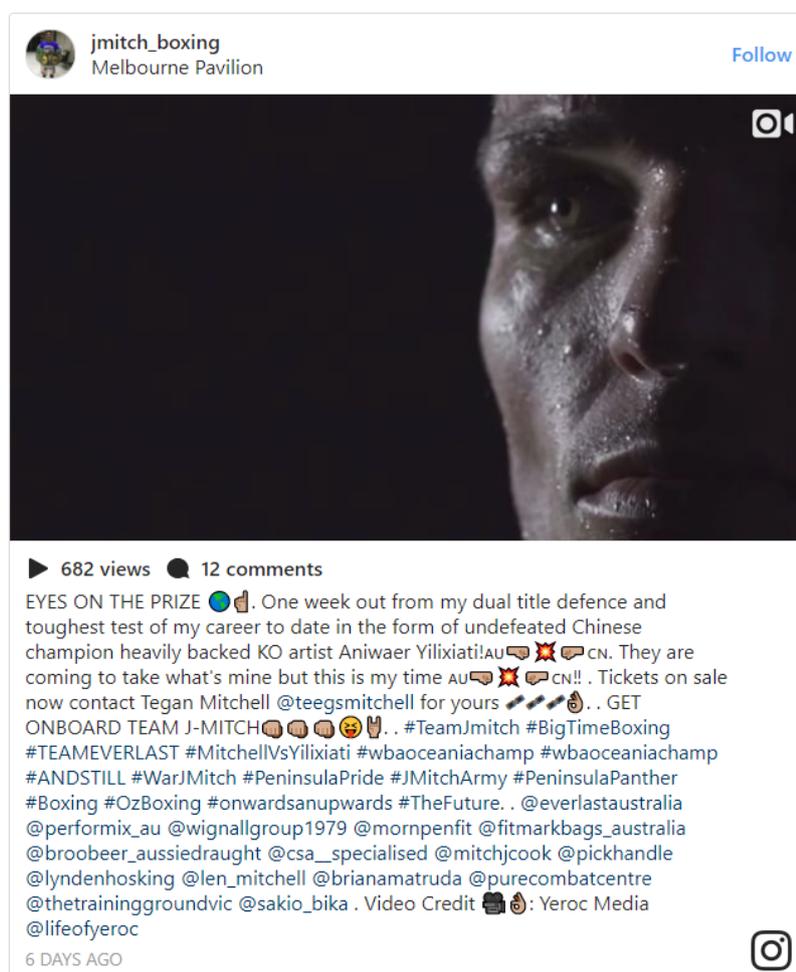
Then injury struck.

"I was state champ, then Asia-Pacific champion but I injured my back and tore both hamstrings – I continually tore my hamstrings," he said.

"Then I took on a fighter who I never should have lost to. He was also undefeated, but I never should've lost to him.

"It was that point that I decided that my body wasn't holding up as a concreter and I decided to throw all my effort into boxing.

"The turning point of my life was losing all the weight, and the turning point of my career was achieving success while still working fulltime. I suffered a loss because I had two torn hamstrings and had ligament damage in my back.



“So we turned to boxing fulltime in 2016.”

Jayde and his wife, Tegan, sold the business and their house and went all-in.

He hasn't tasted defeat since.

He fought six times last year, including wins over veteran Nader Hamdan in Melbourne and Shintaro Matsumoto in Japan.

By the end of 2016 he was named the Australian boxer of the year ahead of the likes of Jeff Horn and Zac Dunn.

This Friday he defends his WBC-OPBF and WBA Oceania titles against undefeated Chinese prospect Ainiwaer Yilixiati at The Melbourne Pavilion.

“Yilixiati is heavily backed in China,” Mitchell said.

“He’s a boxing star over in China – he’s their next champion.

“He’s being groomed to be a world champion, so they’re coming here with the idea of leap-frogging me, taking my 15th world ranking and going on to be the champion.

“He’s very powerful, he mixes his punches up well and changes levels well – body and head.

“He had a very long amateur career. As a professional he’s relatively untested; he’s just run through everyone, so this is their biggest test. As it is for me.

“It’s a high-stakes fight and the winner will go on to bigger and better things.”

<http://www.sportingnews.com/other-sports/news/jayde-mitchell-from-beachball-with-eyes-to-middleweight-contender-boxing/jrxbznz8fkvc1cw26jje5msd>