



Helena Schwerdt, 14, has won two senior races in the past month.

Picture: DEAN MARTIN

New kid on block wins title

Matt Turner

HELENA Schwerdt is beating rivals twice her age in her debut senior season in the SA Athletics League.

Schwerdt, 14, won the 70m open sprint at the pre-Bay Sheffield carnival last month and the 120m women's final, off a 10m handicap, at the Hectorville Gift on January 18.

Last summer she was competing in under-14 and under-17 races.

"It was pretty amazing because (Hectorville) was my first 120m women's sprint," Helena, of Unley Park, says.

"The top three was all junior athletes.

"I mentally had to dig deep but I kept telling myself 'I can do this'."

Helena started in athletics after winning state junior ti-

tles for Grange Surf Life-saving Club. She has been competing in surf lifesaving for seven years and won bronze in the under-15 beach sprint at last year's national titles in Scarborough, WA.

Her coaches Peter Burdett and Charles Sheffield considered her a pro running prospect.

"I had to learn how to do the crouch block start and build up my stamina," she says, revealing how much of a track novice she is.

Helena hopes to compete in the 100m at the Adelaide Track Classic at Santos Stadium next month.

Her major goal this year is to race at the national junior track championships in Sydney in March.

"I'm really concentrating on track this year, competing at interclub (meets)."