

Cracking the big time



By PETER MORLEY

IT may look like a modern version of Ned Kelly, but it's actually the latest in extreme sports: whip boxing.

The only things a would-be competitor needs are a bushman's coat, fencing mask, bush whip ... and no fear.

The sport involves a face-off between two competitors, who then attack with whips, scoring points for head "hits" over three rounds. The fourth round is a free-for-all.

"It is a power thing," said Angie Mooney, 25, the reigning Australian Ladies' Whip Cracking champion.

"Anyone who cracks a whip feels a power surge. Or you can feel quite threatened by it. The whip travels at the speed of sound. It is impossible to dodge, even if you can anticipate.

"Two people having a go at each other with whips may sound dangerous, but it is



WHIPPING UP INTEREST: It may look pretty dangerous, but seasoned whip boxers Gayle Nemeth and Angie Mooney (inset) reckon their sport (above) is a lot less painful than it looks
Pictures: JAMIE HANSON

not. You feel a thud if the coat is hit, and if the whip goes off in your face, you feel a rush of air through the mask.

"It is great fun, a great action sport that a growing number of people want to watch. It is target work with attitude."

Angie and fellow whip boxer Gayle Nemeth recently put on displays at Longreach, in western Queensland, where "even members of the crowd wanted to have a go", and negotiations are under way to demonstrate the sport at this year's Ekka.

Ms Nemeth is also involved in whip manufacturing - she runs Aussie Whip Maker, a company which employs 10 people at a plant on Macleay Island in Moreton Bay.

Each week they turn out about 150 whips for domestic and overseas customers from Russia, Germany, Argentina,

Japan and the United States, who are prepared to pay up to \$2100.

It is a business the Nemeth family has carried on for 148 years. In fact, the company supplied whips for the *Man From Snowy River*-themed opening of the Sydney Olympic Games.