

FEMALE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR



Tawa College's Amelia Kerr bowls for the White Ferns against Pakistan in Christchurch last week.

Kerr's great year continues to spin

LIAM HYSLOP

An international callup capped a year full of achievement for Amelia Kerr.

The Tawa College legspinner made her White Ferns debut against Pakistan last week, becoming one of the youngest players to do so at 16 years, 27 days.

Her impact was immediate, taking 1-21 from her 10 overs, removing Pakistan captain Sana Mir caught and bowled for one as her side won by eight wickets.

She took 0-32 from five overs in the second match on Friday and was 12th man for Sunday's third encounter.

Before she left, she was awarded College Sport Wellington's female Sportsperson of the Year, as well as the female Cricketer of the Year.

Taking out the supreme award against a quality field of finalists was quite an unexpected accolade for the year 11.

"When I heard the other people nominated I wasn't really expecting it after hearing what they had done."

After receiving the gong on November 6, she was on a plane at 10am the next day to join up with her White Ferns team-mates. She has remained with the

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Amelia Kerr

squad this week and would be missing NCEA exams.

Striking that school-sport balance would be something she would have to get used to with future White Ferns callups all-but assured after her debut performances.

"This year they'll take my results from my mocks. School has been really good about it, so it works out quite well."

"I try my hardest at school, I'm not the brightest but I work hard."

It's that sort of work ethic which should hold Kerr in good stead throughout what should be a long cricketering career.

With the increase in competitions which pay women's cricketers, Kerr has the chance to earn a living from cricket which few of her White Ferns team-mates would have dreamed of when they

were her age.

"Women's cricket is definitely growing and I think in years to come it will become a lot more of a career path than it is at the moment," Kerr said.

"I guess cricket and maybe like a mental skills coach later on [as a career], but at the moment cricket is what I really want to do."

Kerr said the mental side of the game was just as important as the physical and something she was always looking to improve. That and her legspin of course, which she said has improved markedly over the winter.

"Training with a purpose is one of things I have really focused on this last winter which has helped me a lot to improve faster."

She has set herself the lofty goal next year of playing at the 50-over World Cup, while continuing to develop her Twenty 20 skills.

In addition to the White Ferns selection, Kerr help her Tawa College team reach the secondary schools nationals again where they will look for a three-peat in early December.

She also played boys' first XI cricket in Wellington for Tawa, the first girl to do so since her White Ferns team-mate Sophie Devine.

MALE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR



Aotea College golfer Daniel Hillier won male Sportsperson of the Year at the College Sport Wellington awards. PHOTO: MARION VAN DUJK/FAIRFAX NZ

Aussie-bound Hillier has stars in his eyes

LIAM HYSLOP

A date with Jason Day is off, but Daniel Hillier will still be star-gazing at the Australian Open this week.

The Aotea College year 13 qualified for the tournament at Royal Sydney, starting on Thursday, by virtue of his six-stroke victory at the Australian boys' amateur in Tasmania in April.

Unfortunately, the guy who he rates as his idol, World No 1 Day, pulled out with a back injury, but former World No 1s Adam Scott and Jordan Spieth remain in the field.

Hillier said he would be using the tournament to soak up as much knowledge as he could from those sorts of players.

"You want to play as well as you can, but it's also a good chance to learn from the top guys. Even if you don't play great, you can still get a lot of learning out of it."

Hillier missed out on a pairing with one of the stars for Thursday's opening round. That honour fell to Australian amateur Curtis Luck, who tees off with Spieth.

But Hillier would be targeting a chat, or even a practise round, with one of the

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Daniel Hillier

big guns.

It's a far stretch from when Hillier won the boys' title, to go with his New Zealand under-19 win later in the year, when he was unaware he would even be in Sydney at this time of the year.

"I was coming off the putting green and one of my mates came up to me and said 'you know you've got an exemption to the Australian Open now'. I said 'you're kidding', my jaw just dropped and it was just a surreal feeling."

Hillier was unable to defend his New Zealand Amateur title at Royal Wellington last month, but this year's results were every bit as good as last year's and earned him back-to-back College Sport Wellington male Sportsperson of the Year awards.

It was a special feeling for Hillier to be able to put Aotea's name up in lights

again. "I've been there since year nine and they've been a massive support to me," he said.

"They've been really flexible which has allowed me to do what I love basically."

Hillier did not have long to dwell on the achievement because he had to get up at 4am the day after the November 6 awards ceremony to get to Sydney to prepare for the New South Wales Open.

It was at that tournament last week where he was shown how tough life as a professional golfer might be.

Rounds of 70 and 71 at the Stonecutters Ridge Country Club had him sitting at three-under, but he missed the cut in what were low-scoring rounds.

Hillier said if everything went to plan he would be turning pro in two years' time.

"For me I've got a two-year plan. It's based around getting more international experience over the next few years then hopefully at the end of 2018 if I'm feeling good about my game and feeling comfortable then I can transition into that professional environment."

"But if I'm not quite ready then I'll wait till I am. It could be a couple of years or it could be 10, just whenever I'm ready."

RUGBY PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Numia's painful year ends in joy

LIAM HYSLOP

The easy road for Xavier Numia would have been to sit out a lot of the first XV rugby season.

Instead, the St Pat's Town prop played through the pain of an injured meniscus in one of his knees, which he suffered in just the second game of the season.

It was still causing him pain as he collected the College Sport Wellington Rugby Player of the Year award on November 6, beating out team-mate Billy Proctor and Wellington College's Naitoa Ah Kuoi to the coveted prize.

"I had an MRI last week and I'll see how it goes," he said after receiving the award.

"It's still playing up a bit now. I played through the pain a lot this year, so I'll see how the MRI goes for what I need to do next."

Being in his last year at school was a big motivator for keeping on playing.

Numia was an integral part of the St Pat's team which made it to the WelTec first XV final, which they lost to Wellington College 12-9.

"It was a pretty hard final, it's always a rivalry against Wellington College. It was pretty sad we couldn't get the result we wanted, but it was a good year for the school."

His performances led to him making the New Zealand Secondary Schools team for the second year in a row, joining team-mate Billy Proctor as the only representatives from the Wellington region in the squad.



St Pat's Town prop Xavier Numia during the Wellington first XV final. ROSS GIBLIN/FAIRFAX NZ

Given the injury, Numia said he was surprised when he got the callup.

"I wasn't really expecting it because I've had the knee injury throughout the year, so I was pretty stoked just to make the team."

The New Zealand team beat their Fijian and Australian counterparts in early October, with Numia coming off the bench in both matches and impressing with his powerful ball running and strong scrummaging skills.

The goal for next year was to lock down a starting spot in the Oriental-Rongotai premier team and hope his performances are enough to earn him

higher honours.

"I'll see what happens next year, I can't promise anything, but if I can, I'll hopefully play for Wellington. I'll just train hard and see what happens."

As for what is now his former school team, Numia said he hoped next year's Town first XV could continue the good form of the past two seasons - Town were champions in 2015 to go with this year's runner-up effort.

"It will be interesting to see how next year goes. We've had a good two years, no pressure on the blokes next year, but hopefully they can continue what we've been doing."

NETBALLER OF THE YEAR

Metuarau just wants to have fun

LIAM HYSLOP

Tiana Metuarau is in no rush to play elite-level netball.

Many have her pegged as a Silver Fern-in-waiting, something which comes with the territory when you play for the New Zealand under-21 team as a 15-year-old, as the Wellington East Girls' College shooter did earlier this year.

But take a step back and remember this is a person taking NCEA Level 1 exams this week.

Her schoolwork this year was mixed with playing for the under-21s and Wellington East team, as well as the New Zealand Secondary Schools team, the Central Pulse Beko League team, the Wellington under-17 team and the Ikaroa Ki Te Tonga under-17 team.

So with another award locked away in the trophy cabinet two Sunday's ago - the College Sport Wellington Netballer of the Year - Metuarau said any goals she set for next year would be mixed with wanting to enjoy playing with her friends.

"Next year for under-21s there is the World Youth Cup in Botswana, so hopefully I can stay in the squad to stay for that."

"There is also the Beko team and the Pulse training partners, so if I become one of those training partners I might be on their bench and maybe get a bit of court time."

"The aim would be to make [the Pulse] in year 13, I just want to get Level 2 for NCEA first and I think I would have matured more mentally by then."



Tiana Metuarau in action for Wellington East Girls' College. MASANORI UDAGAWA

"I've got a long time to make teams. I just kind of want to enjoy playing with my friends, instead of playing up in higher teams all the time."

Wellington East fielded a young team this year, led by Metuarau. They showed continual improvement throughout the year to finish sixth at secondary schools nationals, beaten by perennial rivals St Mary's College in the fifth-sixth playoff.

"We did really well getting to nationals and managing to place in the top-eight. We played St Mary's in the fifth and sixth playoff, unfortunately we lost, but I guess they just came on the day and performed better than us."

"I feel like our team gelled together really well and developed better than I thought we would."

Metuarau was named shooter of the tournament at nationals, while the St Mary's pair of Renee Savai'inaea and Ainsleyana Puleiata were named defender and midcourter of the tournament respectively.

That pair were also finalists for the College Sport award, which meant Metuarau would have been happy even if she had not won.

"Renee and Ainsleyana are two of my really good friends, so had I lost I still would have been really happy for them."

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