

College Sport

Ravindra eyes repeat triumph

LIAM HYSLOP

Rachin Ravindra's Hutt International Boys' School blazer is already cluttered with cricket badges.

On his right side sit eight small rectangular ones indicating individual performances, such as centuries, five-wicket hauls and 2000 career first XI runs.

On his left side sit four bigger ones, with one to commemorate last year's win at secondary schools nationals and another to show he represented New Zealand at the Under-19 World Cup in the West Indies in January.

The year 12 still has plenty of time to add to that collection, with the focus for now on defending the national title at Lincoln, near Christchurch, in early December.

"We've got high expectations again, the goal is always to win the tournament whatever you're going for."

"The team has been going really good, we've been winning a lot of games in the college competition and I'm sure we'll go in with a lot more experience."

"We're a pretty young team this year, we've lost a couple of key players, but now the boys have a lot more experience and we're raring to go."

It should really have been a rebuilding year for HIBS after their all-time leading runscorer Troy Johnson and lightning quick opening bowler Ben Sears finished their schooling last year.



Hutt International Boys' School batsman Rachin Ravindra was named College Sport Wellington male Cricketer of the Year.

They lost their first three games of the Premier Youth season when Ravindra was in the West Indies, but improved to win five games on the trot to narrowly miss out on making the top four.

But they qualified for nationals again when winning the Wellington qualifying tournament in April, which was played separate to the Premier Youth competition.

Ravindra was crucial in that run, scoring 112 in the final at the Basin Reserve as his side beat Wellington College by 45 runs.

He was named player of the tournament at last year's national tournament on the back of scoring 208 runs, with two half-centuries, and taking six wickets at 21 with his left arm spin.

"It was pretty good to win [the award], but most importantly we won [the tournament]. It was good I made a contribution, but all the boys pulled through."

"There were some real close games that gave me a couple of

heart attacks, but we pulled through in the end."

His achievements throughout the year led to him being named College Sport Wellington male Cricketer of the Year earlier this month.

Recently, he has been playing for Hutt District's premier men's team as he tries to make a case for Wellington Firebirds or Wellington A selection at the tender age of 16.

That's a lofty goal, but setting his sights high is something Ravindra has become accustomed to doing.

"The top goal is to play for the Black Caps, but we'll see how that goes. Hopefully it will come soon, but it's about working hard to see if I can get there."

HIBS will meet Hamilton Boys' High School, Otago Boys' High School, Christchurch Boys' High School, Nelson College and St Kentigern's College at nationals this year, starting on December 5.

Under-20 squad is the Main aim

LIAM HYSLOP

Emma Main wants to add a second age-group world cup to her ever expanding football resume.

The St Oran's College year 12 represented New Zealand at the Under-17 Women's World Cup in Jordan in September in which New Zealand managed one win and two losses from three games.

Main said the experience both on and off the field was unforgettable.

"I really enjoyed it. I don't think I'll get an experience like that again, it was just amazing."

"The football was a lot different. Teams from different countries play different styles, it was a lot faster and more physical, but a good challenge and test to see where I am in the world."

Main started the final two games of the tournament, including the 5-0 win over the hosts Jordan.

It has whetted her appetite for international competition and left her with the goal of making the New Zealand team for the Under-20 World Cup in France in 2018.

She returned to New Zealand after the under-17 tournament and was straight back into national league action with Capital, who last weekend beat previously unbeaten Northern 2-1 to qualify for the playoffs.

She's shown good form for Capital and, combined with her performances at the under-17 tournament, gives her a strong case for selection for the under-20s for their world cup campaign.

The most recent batch of under-20s were bundled out of this year's Under-20 World Cup in the group stage following a 2-0 loss to France on Monday in Papua New Guinea.



St Oran College's Emma Main, left, was named female Footballer of the Year at the College Sport Wellington awards.

But the planning for the 2018 tournament has already begun, with the Oceania qualifiers taking place next year.

Once she gets through year 13, Main said she did not plan to follow the lead of many young Kiwi women's footballers in seeking a United States university scholarship.

"I am looking at universities in both America and New Zealand, but I'll probably stay in New Zealand."

"I just want to stay in New Zealand because it's my country and my home and I just can't see myself moving over to another country, but I might [move to the US]."

Main beat out her New Zealand under-17 team-mates Francesca Grange and Maggie Jenkins to the College Sport Wellington female Footballer of the Year award earlier this month, which she said she was surprised to have won.

"I'm very proud, I wasn't expecting it at all but I'm quite happy that I got it."

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Sprint star aims for redemption

LIAM HYSLOP

Nick Smith is in a confident mood a year on from the hamstring injury which prevented his quest for national secondary schools sprinting supremacy.

The Hutt Valley High School year 12 picked up a hamstring strain a week before last year's national championships, but still managed to run Northcote College's Jordan Bolland to 0.01 seconds in the 100m final.

"I think it was even closer than that when you take it down to three decimal places," Smith said yesterday, three days out from the start of this year's competition in Auckland.

"It was close and if I hadn't been injured I think I could have done a bit better. The week before I strained my hamstring. It wasn't a bad strain because I could run, but I was only doing like 50 per cent stride outs a couple of days before."

"I really struggled through, the whole time I was starting off on my other foot because otherwise I'd stuff my hamstring, so I sort of just got through my heat then in the final pushed it a bit harder and hurt myself again."

He didn't allow himself to give up and made it to the 200m final, where the injury really took hold as he finished five seconds adrift of the rest of the field.

It affected the rest of his track season, as he was unable to lower his official 100m personal best of



Hutt Valley High School sprinter Nick Smith, left, competing at a Wellington regional athletics meeting this month. PHOTO: JO MURRAY

10.84, although he did run 10.77 in Canberra in February but it was not an official time due to a 2.1 tailwind.

His shot at completing the 100m-200m double in Auckland this weekend has been boosted by injuries to key rivals, including defending champion Bolland, but he said there was still plenty of strong runners who would be at their peak.

"The guy who won the 100m and 200m for juniors last year [St Peter's College, Auckland's James Guthrie-Croft] will be tough. He's a bit stronger in the 200m, he beat me at the club nationals earlier this year. The whole season I wasn't really well from my injury, but he'll still be strong compe-

tion, especially in the 200m."

Guthrie-Croft holds the joint fastest under-18 100m time of 10.91 this year alongside Smith, while he holds the 200m advantage when he beat Smith by 0.27 seconds at club nationals in a time of 21.67.

But Smith has set some lofty time goals for the upcoming season now that he is injury free.

"I'm hoping to break the New Zealand under-18 100m record. That's 10.56 and I have a PB of 10.77 but that was run in a 2.1 wind, so my official PB is 10.84, but that was over a year ago. I think I can progress a lot this season with my times, it's definitely on the horizon that record."

That probably won't be broken this weekend, but Smith would be targeting overseas meets next year to get close to it.

"It's all but confirmed that I'll be going to Australian national champs for the first time...It will be good competition over there and a lot better conditions for running."

"Then there's a California tour that goes every year at the end of the season, I'm thinking about going on that and that will be even better competition and even better conditions as well."

Once he finishes school at the end of next year, he would be looking to attend a United States university on an athletics scholarship, with the 2018 World Junior Athletics Championships also a target.

For now, it's just about claiming the title of New Zealand's fastest schoolboy athlete.



Imogen Skelton competes in the high jump at a Wellington regional athletics meeting in November. PHOTO: JO MURRAY

LIAM HYSLOP

The senior girls' high jump at secondary schools nationals this weekend is shaping up as one of the more thrilling events of the meet.

And Samuel Marsden Collegiate year 11 Imogen Skelton will be doing everything within her power to upstage her older rivals in her first year in the senior division.

Skelton also runs a quick 800 metres, but due to the scheduling at this year's nationals in Auckland she has forgone that event to focus solely on the high jump.

"I think the 800m final is about two hours before the high jump, so it just wouldn't work and I wanted

to focus on high jump.

"I do like both of them, so it's hard, but I think I'm slightly better at high jump so I'm trying to focus on that this season. I'd quite like to win nationals. I'm in senior for the first time, so I don't know what the competition will be, but the goal is to win."

Standing in her way will be last year's top two in the senior division of Napier Girls' High School's Brianna Stephenson and Onehunga High School's Alex Hyland.

Hyland has the leading under-18 jump this year of 1.77m, while Stephenson won the Australian junior championships with a leap of 1.75m. Skelton gave them a reminder not to discount her by

jumping a personal best of 1.74m in Whanganui earlier this month and said she would be looking to go even higher.

"Hopefully I can jump somewhere around there and it would be good to get a PB as well, so I'm probably looking at 1.75m or something around there."

With an 800m personal best of 2.14.74, the inevitable question comes up about having a crack at a heptathlon.

"I have thought about it, yes, but I think it would be quite hard seeing as I haven't done any long jump, or hurdles, or throwing. Maybe potentially in the future, but not at this stage."

Throughout the season she was hoping to keep beating her per-

sonal best and had her eye on international competition next year.

"I'd quite like to qualify for the World youth champs for next year. They haven't brought out the qualifying standard for that yet, but last year it was 1.77m, so it will probably be something around there. There is also the Australian junior champs, which I think I'll probably be able to go to."

Skelton was named College Sport Wellington's female Athlete of the Year earlier this month, which she said she wasn't expecting to win.

"It was a bit of a surprise because obviously there are loads of other people who could have got it so it was really exciting."