

COLLEGE SPORT



with **Tim Barton**
 email: tim.barton@dompost.co.nz
 (04) 474 0123

Hillier youngest NZ amateur winner



Daniel Hillier watches the progress of a shot during the final of the national amateur golf championships.
 Photo: BWMEDIA

GOLF

DANIEL HILLIER is the youngest player to win the New Zealand men's amateur golf title.

The Aotea College year 12 pupil created his own niche in New Zealand golf history when beating fellow teenager Sam Vincent 6 and 5 in the 36-hole final at the Titirangi course, in Auckland, on Sunday. Hillier was 16 years and 267 days on Sunday, while former world No 1 amateur Danny Lee was 16 years and 272 days when he won the 2007 title. Both players have July birthdays. Hillier is the third 16-year-old to win the championship, which was first held in 1893, the other being Walter Godfrey, who was 16 years and 359 days when he won in 1958. Hillier was thrilled to learn that he was the youngest winner and had broken one of Lee's records. "It's awesome."

Lee is now playing on the PGA tour and Hillier dreams of getting to the same level. In the meantime, he is content to enjoy what has been a wonderful month.

His national title came nine days after he finished third in the Australian under-18 championships, at his overseas debut.

He has taken enormous strides over the past six months, going from being a promising youngster to measuring up against the country's leading amateurs. But the aspect of last weekend's

win that probably excited Hillier the most was that the victory guaranteed him a place in the field for the 2016 New Zealand Open.

"It would be a great experience to play in the Open.

"There are not many spots [in the field] for amateurs and to qualify for the tournament, almost a year before the event, is awesome."

Hillier, who recorded 69 and 75 to comfortably qualify for the match play section last week, had his nerve and temperament tested on the way to the final.

He had to come from behind to beat Auckland No 3 James Eng 2 and 1 in the opening round, before recording a dramatic win at the 18th against Ryan Chisnall, the second qualifier last week and the 2013 runner-up.

Chisnall was three up after seven holes and Hillier had to birdie the last four holes to win one up. He holed a big putt at the 15th to stay in contention and then put his approach shot to within four feet in each of the final three holes. "I knew I had to attack and the greens were soft.

"But to birdie the last four was pretty special. It showed that anything can happen and the win gave me a bit more confidence."

Hillier had to go to the 18th again, when recording another one up victory in his quarterfinal, against Australian Austin Bautista - who had won his two previous matches six and five - before toppling defending champion and national No 1 Josh Munn two and one in their semifinal.

I knew I had to attack and the greens were soft. But to birdie the last four was pretty special.

Daniel Hillier



"I wasn't really expecting to win [against Munn], to be honest," said Hillier, who landed the decisive blow when he birdied the 16th. "He's No 1 on the order of merit and has won a few good tournaments.

"That was the first game that I played the front nine really well. I was down in most of my matches coming into the back nine but the back nine suited my eye pretty well."

The final proved to be Hillier's easiest match. He recorded a double bogey and a bogey over the first five holes but did not drop another shot till the 30th and recorded nine birdies over the 31 holes. He was one down after seven but regained the lead at the 10th and was never headed after.

Ironically, Vincent, 17, had been the only player to beat Hillier at the national interprovincial tournament last December, win-

ning one up in the semifinal match against Waikato. "There was a bit of redemption there," Hillier said.

Hillier also credited his caddy and Manor Park clubmate John Warrington with being a significant influence last week. "He kept me calm and we made a lot of good decisions. I don't think I would have got to the final without him."

Hillier's win was the first leg of a big double for his coach, Kevin Smith, who also coaches Julianne Alvarez, the former Sacred Heart College pupil, who won the women's title. Alvarez, 18, also won the national stroke play last month.

"They are two smart kids who have worked really hard," Smith said. "They are both very mature for their ages and great learners and listeners.

"One of the big things with Daniel is that when he is tested at the next level, he takes the jump and steps up. Not everyone can do that. Instead of being frightened, he's excited.

"His maturity and attitude are his main strengths. He's very focused and determined and has that will to win.

"He's also got a lot stronger in the last couple of years and hits the ball a long way. His technique is not quite there yet but it's getting there and has become a lot more solid.

"But a lot of players have a good technique - it's the mindset that really matters."

Scots College season starts on world stage

RUGBY

THEY conquered the country in 2014, and the world.

The Scots College first XV squad leave on Sunday for the Sanix world rugby youth tournament in Japan.

It's an adventure made possible by the efforts of the 2014 squad, who shared the national first XV title. Scots drew the national final with the 2014 Sanix winners Hamilton Boys' High School but earned the trip to Japan by scoring the first try. Scots also finished a memorable season as holders of the Moascar Cup.

It will be a hard act to follow but playing in the Sanix tournament in Fukuoka, Japan's sixth largest city, will be an exciting way to start.

It would be a misnomer to describe the Japanese tournament as a genuine world championship. A variety of criteria are used to select the participating teams, and New Zealand, which is normally represented by the national champions - albeit from the previous winter - has dominated the tournament in recent years.

Hamilton Boys' High made it five wins in succession for New Zealand schools last year but did not clinch the 15-11 win, against a South African team, till inside the last two minutes.

Hamilton was also successful in 2010 and 2011 with Kelston Boys winning in 2012 and St Kentigern in 2013.

Christchurch Boys' and Rotorua schools have also won the tournament twice but no New Zealand side made the final for three years from 2007, with Gisborne Boys' and Hamilton among the teams to miss out.

Scots will be the first Wellington side to play at the tournament.

The 2015 tournament has a truly international cast with teams from Russia, Chinese Taipei, Korea, Canada, Australia, England and South Africa, along with Scots, joining eight Japanese schools.

England will be represented by Truro College, from Cornwall, who have been finalists at their past two appearances at the tournament, in 2010 and 2012.

Paul Roos Gymnasium, from Stellenbosch, which will represent South Africa, has produced more Springboks than any other South African school, the most recent being Willie le Roux. Their first XV have had seven lead-up games in preparation for Japan and won six.

Brisbane Boys' College, who will represent Australia, is another school with a strong rugby tradition and the old boys include Wallabies Will Genia and James Horwill.

Scots played an early pre-season game against Rongotai and have since beaten Nelson College 34-14 and Marlborough Boys' College 62-35, scoring six tries against Nelson and nine against Marlborough.

"There were some promising signs," assistant coach Geoff Hall said. "It looks like we will be able to score points again."

Scots will be led by fullback Peter Umaga-Jensen, who will have his twin brother Thomas at second five-eighth. Both players were outstanding in the finals series last year.



Connor Garden-Bachop will be a key member of the Scots College winter. Photo: PHOTOSPORT

THE SQUAD

The Scots squad for the Sanix tournament is: Lotunu'u Haueia, James Pearce, George Jacobs, Alex Fidow, Jack Loader, Moala Katoa, Matt Sisson, Jarimar Schuster, Henry Mexted, Kiwa Erueti-Newman, Harry Saker, Ezra Dunlop, Connor Rowbotham, William Findlay, Christian Lee, Ollie Whiteman, Jack Royal, Josh Wilson, Thomas Woods, Luke Nixon, Thomas Umaga-Jensen, Peter Umaga-Jensen, Solomon Sovea, Malo Manuaa, Connor Garden-Bachop, Joe Boswell, Alec Cannons, Tommy Prescott, Drew Meiklejohn, Daniel Brown.

Connor Garden-Bachop scored three tries against both Nelson and Marlborough and will be a potent finisher on the wing and outside back Joe Boswell, who also scored three tries against Marlborough, is in his third year in the first XV.

Ollie Whiteman, who was in the second XV last year, is likely to be the starting halfback and year 12 Josh Wilson, who was in the under-15 side last year, is among the options at first five-eighth.

Whoever plays at first five-eighth will be following New Zealand secondary schools rep TJ Va'a who was the side's most influential player last year.

"TJ will leave a hole and you are not going to find someone of

that calibre," Hall said.

The returning forwards from the 2014 squad include prop Alex Fidow, locks Jarimar Schuster and Henry Mexted, hooker Lotunu'u Haueia and loose forward Harry Saker.

Fidow, who made the national secondary schools side in 2014, is in his fourth year in the first XV and should have a big impact this winter, while Schuster and Mexted will also be key members of the pack.

The newcomers include year 12 loose forward Ezra Dunlop, who was previously at Tawa College.

Scots also have a new coaching lineup with Hall, who had a similar role last year, joined by Filo Tiatia and Sam Rasch.

Former All Black Tiatia replaces Earl Va'a as head coach and has impressive credentials as both a player and coach. He will also be in familiar territory next week, as he played and coached at the top level in Japan.

Rasch, who coached the Wellington representative seven's team with Scott Waldrom, will be responsible for the backline.

Scots are taking a squad of 30 to Japan and will need the numbers, with the squad facing six games in eight days.

"It will be important to manage the playing time so that the better players are reasonably fresh for the cross-over games," Hall said.

The team will be away for almost a fortnight, with the opening game next Wednesday and the last on May 6.

Wellington netballers making an impact at a national level

NETBALL

WELLINGTON players make up a quarter of the just announced New Zealand secondary schools netball team.

The Wellington East trio of Mila Reuelu-Buchanan, Marcelle Parkes and Tiana Metuarau and

St Mary's defender Colleen Faleafaga were among the 12 players named in the team on Tuesday.

It is an extraordinary result for college netball in Wellington, which has rarely been represented in the national team in recent years.

Reuelu-Buchanan, who plays in midcourt, also made the team last year, when she became the just third Wellington player to be selected since 2007.

Whitney Souness, now a member of the Central Pulse squad, made the team from St Mary's in 2013, and former Wellington Girls'

star Emma Weenik was selected in 2009 and 2010.

Selection would have been particularly sweet for Parkes, who, faced with having to make a choice between netball and softball this winter, withdrew from the Junior White Sox team for the world championships be-

fore knowing whether she would make the national netball side.

Parkes has played most of her school netball at goal defence but has been selected in midcourt for the national side.

Both Parkes and Faleafaga trialled for the New Zealand team last year and Faleafaga made the

tournament team at the national secondary schools championships in October.

Fourteen-year-old Metuarau, a goal shoot and daughter of Silver Ferns coach Wai Taumaunu, is in only her second year at secondary school.

Outstanding Mt Albert Gram-

mar defender Holly Fowler, who has made the side for the fourth time, is likely to lead the team, who will compete at the trans-Tasman under-19 tournament in Rotorua next month.

The four Wellington players were also added to the pathway to podium netball squad.

College Sport Wellington
 Where sports stars unfold

Major Sponsors:
 THE DOMINION POST
 WelTec

FUJI XEROX
 APEX print+design
 SPORT NEW ZEALAND
 SPORTS DISTRIBUTORS
 Keep Up With Newstalk ZB WELLINGTON 89.3FM
 NZCT
 Wellington Community Trust
 Infinity foundation Limited
 THE LION FOUNDATION