

# COLLEGE SPORT



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Next-door neighbours and Wellington East athletes Phoebe Edwards, left, and Kelsey Forman will be travelling to Colombia together for the world youth championships.  
Photo: MAARTEN HOLL/FAIRFAX NZ

## Neighbours in NZ world youth team

### ATHLETICS

YOU don't have to live in Island Bay to represent New Zealand at the youth world championships. But it certainly appears to help.

In a coincidence that defies the laws of probability, next-door neighbours Phoebe Edwards and Kelsey Forman make up a third of the New Zealand team that will go to Colombia in July.

The Wellington East pair were among six athletes named for the championships last week.

The under-18 youth championships alternate with the under-20 junior world championships and only athletes born in 1998 or 1999 are eligible for this year's event.

Edwards and Forman have been neighbours and schoolmates since the Edwards family moved to Wellington, from England, when Phoebe was 7.

They started their athletics career together but have taken a divergent path to the top and do not train together.

Forman specialises in the steeplechase on the track and is an accomplished cross-country runner, while Edwards is a sprinter who qualified for the world champs in the high jump and heptathlon.

"We do completely different events and have different coaches and training groups," Edwards said. Forman added that even going for a run together was impractical. "Phoebe never runs for more than five minutes."

The odds against neighbours being selected to represent New Zealand at an athletics world championship would appear to be overwhelming, though there has been a similar occurrence in Wellington.

Hataitai neighbours Harry Miskimmin and Ollie Logan both made the national under-18 hockey team in 2012.

Though Forman and Edwards had achieved the qualifying marks for the youth championships, they were not guaranteed to be selected and there was an element of relief when the team was announced.

"It was good to get the email," Edwards said. "It has been ages since I first qualified, in January."

Edwards will compete in the heptathlon and high jump in Cali, in Colombia, while Forman will contest the 2000m steeplechase.

Edwards matched or bettered the high jump mark of 1.77 three times but did not qualify for the heptathlon till her last attempt, at the Australian championships in Brisbane at the end of last month.

Forman has lacked competition in her age group in the steeplechase but qualified for Colombia

in spectacular style when breaking the New Zealand under-17 record at the national track and field championships in March, two days before she turned 17.

The youth and world junior championships are elite-level competitions and rank as "black single" events for Kiwi athletes. The others are the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and the world indoor and outdoor championships.

"It's the world champs for my age and we will be up against the best of the best," Edwards said.

"We will be wearing the uniform they wear at the Olympics, which will be cool."

Edwards is the current New Zealand and Australian under-18 high jump champion and also won the New Zealand under-20 title this year, but believes her long-term future will be as a heptathlete.

"At some point, my height will stop me getting much better in the high jump. I'm 1.70m and the best high jumpers are over six feet [1.83m]."

"I've got a heptathlete's build and I've always done lot of events. I've never specialised just in the high jump."

"I was really happy with my heptathlon score [5163 points] in Brisbane and I'm hoping to go over 5250 [at the youth championships]. I know I can pick up points in the throwing events, provided I get the technique right."

"I will also be working quite hard at the 800m. I think I had only run an 800m once before my first heptathlon. I don't mind running it and pushing yourself, but you feel awful afterwards."

Forman is about to enter the cross-country season which should dovetail in with her preparation for Colombia and hopes to be able to contest the national schools cross-country, in Dunedin in June, before heading to the youth championships.

The year 13 student was the Wellington secondary schools cross-country champion last year, finished seventh at the national championships, in her first year in the senior ranks, and was the runner-up in the under-18 division at the national club cross-country championships. She also recorded a top-20 finish at the Australian under-18 cross-country championships.

Forman has largely had to run solo in her steeplechase contests in Wellington but knows a lack of competition won't be a problem in Colombia.

"There is probably going to be a gap between the Kenyans and the rest of us... But it's going to be very exciting."



Sam Bacon in winning form at the national optimist championships in Wellington.

Photo: CHRIS COAD PHOTOGRAPHY

## Sailing takes young Sam around world

### YACHTING

SAM BACON is a sailor but he hasn't had to join the navy to see the world.

The 14-year-old Scots College pupil has already competed in Europe and South America and there are trips to Poland and Bermuda on the horizon this year.

Bacon capped the national optimist title in Wellington last week. It was his second major title in 2015, after he won the Tanner Cup, the renowned P class competition, in January.

The Tanner Cup may have a special thrill for Bacon got a special honour from winning the optimist title, as the competition was hosted by the Worsler Bay

Boating Club, his home club.

"The Tanner Cup is probably better known but I wanted to win the optimist title a bit more," the year 10 pupil said. "Knowing the local conditions was a lot of help but it also added a bit of pressure."

Bacon, who had been runner-up at the 2014 nationals, stepped up when it counted last week.

He had four wins and two seconds in the eight qualifying races but was off the pace in the first two races on the final day, before finishing with a win and a second, to win 2014 Australian sailor Otto Henry.

Henry won the 2014 Australian championships and is the current New South Wales champion.

"I had a bit of a rough patch [on the last day] but managed to clam-

per my way out," Bacon said.

He will now be part of the New Zealand team for the world championships in Dziwnow, Poland, in August.

The world regatta will be his third appearance on the international stage. He competed at the 2013 European championships, in Hungary, and the world championships in Argentina last year.

He is confident that he will benefit from the earlier regattas when he heads to Poland.

"I was probably a bit too young when I went to the European championships and I didn't sail as well as I would have liked at the world champs last year, finishing 13th in the bronze flight.

"It was a neat experience but I was a bit nervous and

**'I had a bit of a rough patch [on the last day] but managed to clamber my way out.'**

Sam Bacon



overwhelmed. But I think I will definitely sail a lot better this year. I will know what's going on and be a lot more relaxed."

Bacon's national title also means that he is able to compete at the Junior Gold Cup regatta in Bermuda, a fully-funded trip, provided there is no clash with the world championships.

Bacon would still be eligible to sail an optimist next year but this will be his final year in the class and he will concentrate sailing a starling next year and will also get some experience in a 29er.

He competed in his first starling regatta this week, finishing 39th at the national championships at New Plymouth.

A 29er is a double-handed boat and Bacon is likely to team up with Rongotai College's Albert Stanley, who finished 14th at the optimist championships. "We will try to get past the capsizing stage this year," Bacon said.

Four Wellington sailors finished in the top 30, in a big fleet, at the optimist nationals, with Oliver Crowley (Scots) 13th and Will Wright (Scots) 26th.

## Hillier in form for national amateur champs

### GOLF

DANIEL HILLIER will go into the opening round of the New Zealand amateur championships in Auckland today in peak form.

The 16-year-old Aotea College student has taken his game to another level in the past month.

He capped some impressive efforts against the leading New Zealand amateurs by finishing third in the Australian junior championships in Adelaide at the weekend.

Playing at the Kooyonga Golf Club, Hillier recorded rounds of 76, 68, 73 and 72 to finish one-over par on the testing par 72 course.

Leading Australian amateur Ryan Ruffels was 15 strokes clear of the field but just four strokes separated the next seven players.

Six New Zealanders made the cut in the field of 140 but no others finished in the top 20.

The tournament is restricted to players who are under 18 on the opening day, and Hillier ranked the result as one of his best.

"It was my first time playing in Australia and I wasn't sure what to expect from the course or the opposition."

Ruffels, who also won the tournament last year, is the same age as Hillier but is now ranked among the top 20 amateur players, of any age, in the world. He shot 65



Aotea College's Daniel Hillier is contesting the New Zealand amateur championship in Auckland this week.  
Photo: FAIRFAX NZ

- a course record - and 66 in the last two rounds and was the only player to finish under-par. "He's just amazing for his age," Hillier said.

Three previous winners of the Australian title - Adam Scott, Jason Day and the 2013 winner Antonio Murdaca - were playing in the Masters at the weekend.

Few New Zealanders have notched top three placings in the boys division in recent years. Tyler Hodge, who was successful

in 2012, has been the sole Kiwi winner since 2000 and Hillier is the only other player in the past decade to finish in the top three.

"The course was quite a challenge but the fairways were like carpets and the greens were very true," Hillier said. "My putter was pretty hot and I had one of my best putting weeks."

"I was also hitting my wedges pretty good and was averaging 15 feet from the pin in my [four-under par] second round."

However, Hillier also learnt that he needs to temper his aggressive play. He made 21 birdies and an eagle over the four rounds but they were offset by 15 bogeys, three double bogeys and a triple bogey.

"I'm always pretty aggressive, especially when I know I can get at the flag, but I need to tone it back a bit, while still giving myself opportunities."

"Some of the holes [at Kooyonga] could be attacked without too many problems but there were others where if you attacked and things went wrong, you were coming away with a bogey at best."

Hillier's Adelaide efforts followed strong showings in the Lawnmaster Classic in Palmerston North, his first appearance on the Charles tour, and in the New Zealand stroke play championships at Paraparumu.

He opened with a 69 and a 68 in the Lawnmaster, to be sharing fifth place after two rounds. He lost ground over the last two rounds but still finished six-under par, in 26th place, and was among the top 10 amateurs.

"It was a good experience and I got to play with some good players. Our games are not too much different [from the professionals] but it's the consistency with which they do it that

separates them. They don't make the mistakes that we do."

The stroke play championships began four days later and Hillier completed the four rounds two-over par and in equal 12th place. He was also the best of the Wellington entrants.

The amateur championships are being played at Titirangi and comprise two rounds of stroke play with the top 32 qualifying for the match play.

Hillier was among the top 100 qualifiers, in a field of more than 100, last year, before losing in the first round of match play.

He also found time to contest the College Sport Wellington championships at Royal Wellington, recording a 67 to win the individual gross by six shots from Riley King (St Bernard's).

Gabrielle Palado (Marsden), who is also playing in the New Zealand amateur this week, won the girls' gross with a 72. Palado, a Wellington senior representative, finished 20th at the national stroke play.

Paraparumu College won the Greenstone Trophy for the team gross at the College Sport championships, beating Wellington College by seven shots.

The Paraparumu team comprised Gray Laurensen, Glenn Hayward, Cooper Wattam and Connor Levesque.

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