

COLLEGE SPORT



with **Liam Hyslop**
email: liam.hyslop@fairfaxmedia.co.nz
(04) 474-0279

HVHS chase dual premier grade titles

BASKETBALL

TWO teams in black: one having to change tack, the other looking to go back to back.

That's the best way to sum up the Hutt Valley High School senior basketball teams, who have both started the premier season with 3-0 records.

The girls' team are the ones forced to head in a new direction after losing three of their five starters from last year's team which lost to Wellington Girls' in the Sharp Cup final.

The boys' team have come into the squad with the hopes of winning back the cup which the team held in 2013.

Grace Vaofusi is one of the team's two captains and said it has taken a while for the new players to gel on the court.

"New year, new team. We're trying to work on things and improve."

"It's mainly just our chemistry on the court; we're great off the court and get on together so well but we're still trying to find combinations that will work."

The team have yet to be troubled in this year's Sharp Cup, with Aotea, Paraparaumu and Sacred Heart all unable to get within 35 points of the team.

"We've won our first three games in the league, so it's been a good start but we played the teams that are kind of new to the premier league," Vaofusi said.

They still have to play Wellington Girls' and St Mary's, two teams which they lost to during grading.

St Mary's have a new coach this season in Nixon Penese and scored an impressive 62-61 win over Wellington Girls' last Friday

on the back of 20 points from Ainsleyana Puleiata.

It was a rare loss for the competition favourites Wellington Girls', who beat St Mary's by 10 and HVHS by 27 during the grading games and have the fourth-highest scorer in the league in Tiare Ngata.

Newlands also look strong, with the Pilitati triplets leading them to a 3-0 record, including an impressive win over St Mary's.

HVHS play St Mary's this weekend, which Vaofusi said would be their first big test of the premier season proper.

While she thought the entire team had played well this season, she singled out two players for praise.

"Leah Mafua and Jordan Rangitawa have really stepped up for us and are playing really well."

Mafua, a year 10, is the team's leading scorer, having put up 27 and 30 points in her last two games on her way to becoming the league's second-highest scorer.

"By the time she becomes a year 13 she's going to be amazing," Vaofusi said.

The 15-year-old received good news on a personal level recently when she was told she had made the wider New Zealand under-17 squad.

"It was my first time trialling for a New Zealand team, so I was really excited when I found out."

"I've been working towards it for such a long time."

The HVHS senior boys' team are trying to go back-to-back.

Like the girls, they have started 3-0 in their defence of the Pohlen Cup.

But unlike the girls, they have already been tested this year, beating their arch rivals and 2014 beaten finalists St Pat's Town 89-81 last Friday.



Hutt Valley High School captain Grace Vaofusi in action during her team's loss to Wellington Girls' College in the 2014 Sharp Cup final. Photo: MASANORI UDAGAWA

Team captain Dion Yee said the team was pleased to get the win but they should have won by more after beating the same team by 26 points during the grading games.

"We were up by 15 and we got a bit complacent and they came back hard."

It had been a similar tale in recent weeks for a side stacked with talent that had retained the same starting lineup as last year.

"We've lacked a bit of intensity at times, we've just got to bring it more," Yee said.

"We've got to work as a team a bit better."

The team face another stiff test this Friday, when they take on the other undefeated team in the grade, Wellington College.

"We beat them in grading by 11 points but it will be closer this week I think. They've got a lot of good allrounders and are solid, whereas we have our ups and downs during games."

Yee said all of the team's starters were playing well, with Jordan Hunt and Lucien Beck

leading the scoring. "It's been a good team effort, all the starters have been hitting double digits in scoring."

St Pat's Town look unlikely to recapture the title which they have won five times since 2006 - the last of which was in 2013.

Wellington College could stamp themselves as title contenders with another strong showing against HVHS this week.

They have struggled to threaten the big two in recent years.

Wellington College aims to build momentum

RUGBY

IF THIS was the Wellington college rugby competition a few years ago, Wellington College would be feeling the pressure about now.

Three or four years ago you had to make the top-four to make the playoffs, but these days, much like in Super Rugby, the top-six make it through.

Wellington College sit in fifth position after their 38-27 traditional loss to St Pat's Silverstream last Wednesday.

The team were in Christchurch yesterday for another traditional against Christchurch Boys' High School, before fronting up to table-topping Scots College on Saturday.

Wellington College coach Lincoln Rawles said had it been a few years ago then he would be looking at this week's fixtures in a different light.

"It's not ideal to have this traditional fixture and then playing Scots on the weekend, it's tough but it would be worse if it was still a top four format for the playoffs."

"The reality of today's competition, with the top six making quarterfinals, this week's game isn't the be all and end all."

While they do not have to win the Scots game, Rawles said he hoped his young side would continue to show the improvement they had all season.

"We look to play well and win every game, but we're a young team and I hope we will continue to improve as the season goes on."

"The crucial one now is really how we finish the season, we want to get some momentum up and ideally want to move up the ladder and get a home quarterfinal."

They sit on 12 points, the same number as St Pat's Town in fourth and three behind the third-placed Rongotai College.



Wellington College coach Lincoln Rawles says year 11 Naitoa Ah Kuoi is now the "old fella" of the pack.

Rawles said they had taken a lot out of the last two losses, to Stream and a 16-12 traditional defeat to St Pat's Town.

"The loss at St Pat's Town, at the end of the day, they scored just before fulltime to go ahead and we had a chance to go back down and win it but lost it at the end."

"Against Stream we couldn't contain in the first half their strong centre. We got back into our work in the second half, but by then we were too far behind."

The form of Kemara Hauti-Parapara, Jimmy Hewitt and Sitivi Paongo was pleasing, Rawles said. "The same can be said for our big lock Naitoa Ah Kuoi, who's only a year 11. He was starting lock as a year 10, so he's now considered the old fella of the pack."

Scots came into Saturday's game undefeated and were rampant in a 51-3 win over Wairarapa College last weekend.

It was a week of bonus-point thrashings, as Town beat Tawa 81-8 and a Esikeli Tomaisava'i hat-trick helped Rongotai beat HIBS 74-9.

More blowouts could be on the cards when HIBS take on Stream, Tawa host Rongotai and Town travel to Wairarapa - although the first could be tighter than many expect given the rivalry between the two Upper Hutt colleges.

BRIEFS

ATHLETICS National targets

Wellington's top cross-country runners will take on the nation's best at the secondary schools nationals this weekend. The two senior Wellington secondary schools champions warmed up for the event with strong showings in the Dorne Cup on Saturday. Wellington East's Kelsey Forman outpaced her rivals to win the women's under-18 division by 13 seconds, while Good's James Preston also showed good form, finishing second in the men's under-20 division, just eight seconds adrift of Marcus Karamanolis.

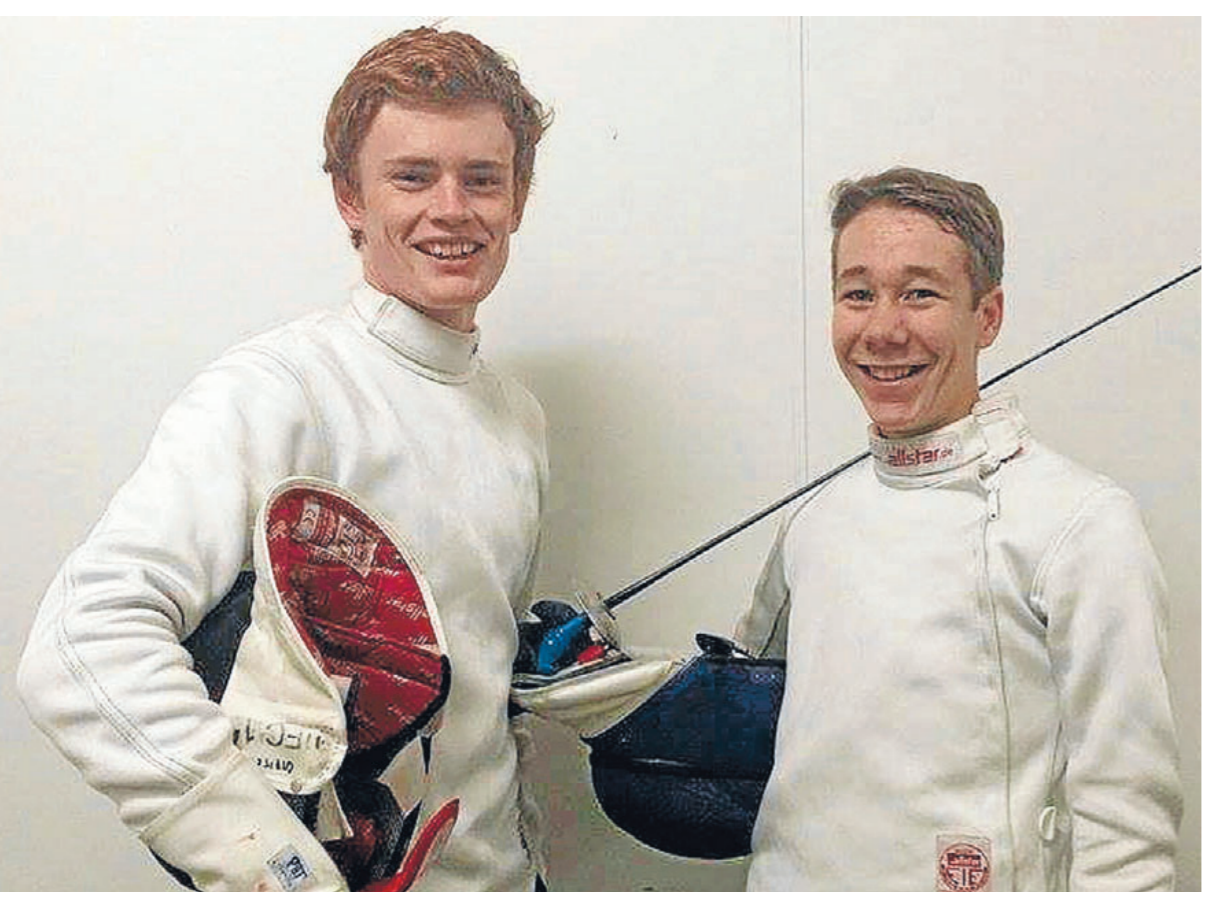
FOOTBALL HIBS go top

Hutt International Boys' School stamped themselves as genuine title contenders in the boys' premier youth

football competition with a 2-1 win over defending champions Hutt Valley High School. The win points HIBS to the top of the table, two points clear of Wellington College, who drew 1-1 with Scots. HVHS are winless and bottom, but have played the two top teams in both their games. The second round of the premier girls' grade is tonight.

UNDERWATER HOCKEY Another defeat

Fresh from their first defeat in 98 games, at the central zone tournament, Wellington Girls' College have lost again. They went down 3-2 to Wellington East in the Wellington premier competition last week, having beaten the same side 7-0 on May 19. In the boys' competition, Scots College narrowly avoided a loss to HIBS, scraping through 5-4 last week. They faced Wellington College, for the Solomon Shield last night.



James Harwood, left, and Nick Henderson will face some tough competition in South Africa. Photo: FENCING NEW ZEALAND

Fencers aim high at Commonwealths

FENCING

TWO Wellington fencers are preparing for their first big overseas test.

James Harwood (Scots College) and Nick Henderson (Hutt Valley High School) will be attending the Commonwealth Cadet Championships in Cape Town next month.

The pair have trained together for more than five years at the Hutt Valley Fencing Club and have competed in the Australian Nationals, but this will be their first major overseas competition.

Henderson, 16, said it was an ideal time to test themselves against competitors from around the world. "It will be the first time I've faced people of this calibre."

Harwood, 17, agreed and said the trip was mainly about getting exposure to a higher level of competition than can be found in Australasia.

"It's going to be the first big one for me. I've been over to Australia for the last few years but this will be the biggest by far."

'I was always the kid who would pick up a stick and swing it around the backyard, so someone suggested I look at fencing.'

Nick Henderson

"It's mainly for the experience and I'm aiming for the top 16 as well."

The pair recently registered top-15 finishes at the North Island Foil Championships against much older competition.

Henderson said he initially got into fencing after showing sword skills in the backyard.

"I was always the kid who would pick up a stick and swing it around the backyard, so someone suggested I look at fencing."

"I was eight or nine when I started and my first major competition was in December 2009, when I came second in an under-nine competition."

"That second was what made me want to come back, it showed me I had raw potential in the sport."

The boys compete in the foil division of fencing, where you can only point and thrust with the weapon. There are two other divisions: sabre and epee.

"The sabre is the hacking, slashing weapon used for cavalry in the old days, and can only hit the waist up," Henderson said.

"The epee is the gentleman's weapon and is poking only but is full body."

Fencing is a taxing sport, for the body, mind and wallet.

Henderson estimates he would have spent \$20,000 from the "bank of mum and dad" since he started, while Harwood said he has spent \$2500 on gear this year alone and the trip to South Africa would cost \$6000.

The team going to Cape Town have started a Givealittle page to help fundraise money for the trip.

Henderson said the sport not only drained his parents' bank account, but also himself mentally and physically.

He likened it to a game of physical chess. "It's three-minute intervals of intense physical and mental exertion."

"I train up to five days a week for two hours a pop. It's mainly about working on that raw fitness now, as I look at going to international competitions."

Henderson has given himself to goal of making the Commonwealth Games in the future.

"I'd like to make it to the senior Commonwealth Games, not just the baby one, either in three years or the next one after that."

Harwood was hesitant to put a long-term goal out there for himself but said he was focused on putting his best foot forward at the competition in Cape Town.

The competition runs from July 11-17.

College Sport Wellington
Where sports stars unfold

Major Sponsors:
THE DOMINION POST
WelTec

FUJI XEROX
APEX print+design
NZCT
Wellington Community Trust

SPORT NEW ZEALAND
SPORTS DISTRIBUTORS
Keep Up With **Newstalk ZB** WELLINGTON 89.3FM
Infinity foundation Limited
THE LION FOUNDATION