

COLLEGE SPORT



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AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .

MALE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR



Daniel Hillier became the youngest winner of the national amateur championship in May.

Photo: MARK TAYLOR/FAIRFAX NZ

Hillier on course for fine career

GOLF

DANIEL HILLIER'S self-belief is at an all-time high.

The Aotea College year 12 had a year to remember on the golf course, becoming the youngest winner in the 122-year history of the New Zealand Amateur Championships and youngest winner of a professional Charles Tour event.

It led to the 17-year-old adding another accolade to his growing list of honours on Sunday night, as he was crowned the male Sportsperson of the Year at the College Sport Wellington awards.

"To be honest I was quite surprised. There was some really big competition up there that I thought were really worthy of winning the award, so when I was called out I was pretty speechless," he said after receiving the award.

His achievements for the year also include winning the New Zealand under-19 title, which helped him beat Noah Billingsley (Onslow College, football), Hayden Robertson (Onslow, rowing) and Peter Umaga-Jensen (Scots College, rugby) to the top gong.

He said his golf improved after winning the New Zealand amateur title in April, when he bettered Danny Lee's record as the youngest winner by five days.

'I've managed to reach heights that I never thought I would this year.'

Daniel Hillier

"The big part of why and how I've made these improvements is that self-belief. The win at the New Zealand Amateur gave me a lot of confidence and I've managed to reach heights that I never thought I would this year."

He rated winning the Harewood Open on the Charles Tour last month as the highlight of the year.

"I was going up against a field of the best professionals in New Zealand and I didn't really think I would be a winner but I managed to come through."

Hillier's form this year has led to comparisons between him and Lee, who was the world's No 1 amateur before turning professional in 2009. Lee's career took a dip after turning pro, but he has risen up the world rankings this year after winning his first PGA Tour event.

Hillier said he looked up to Lee, but didn't feel any pressure as a result of being compared to him.

"I wouldn't say I feel pressure, it's

more excitement than anything. It reassures me that I'm on the right track and if I keep putting in the hard work hopefully I'll be able to do some of the stuff he does."

He would be looking to embark on a year of international amateur play after leaving school in 2017 before making any decision on turning professional, he said.

"They've got an international tournament campaign in 2017, where you get in contact with New Zealand Golf and organise some events overseas and go over there on your own and get a taste of what it will be like when you first turn professional."

"When I was playing at Harewood I was talking to a few professionals about their first few years as a pro about what it was like and they said there would never be a time when you would feel 100 per cent ready so you've really just got to go in and do it."

"It's really just finding the right time to do it, it could be a couple of years away it could be 10."

As a result of his amateur win, he would be competing in the New Zealand Open next year, which he said he would be looking forward to.

ONLINE
 For the full list of winners, go to dompost.co.nz



FEMALE SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR



College Sport Wellington Sportsperson of the Year Phoebe Edwards competes during the high jump at the national athletics championships.

Edwards eyes the world stage

ATHLETICS

PHOEBE EDWARDS' 2015 athletics achievements stretch across two A4 pages.

Her dominance across a number of athletics events makes for a long list and also means it was of little surprise when the Wellington East Girls' College year 13 was crowned female Sportsperson of the Year at the College Sport Wellington awards on Sunday.

But the 17-year-old admitted to being shocked when her name was read out.

"I was pretty surprised, I was kind of nervous to go up on the stage again," she said, after also winning Athlete of the Year. "I thought [cricketeer] Melie Kerr would be in with a good chance, but I guess she is year 10 so she's got a lot of years ahead to be winning the award."

While Kerr has represented New Zealand A as a 14-year-old this year, Edwards was perhaps shining her own achievements a little short.

She won eight national titles in the 2014-15 track and field season, including high jump, long jump and 100-metre hurdles champion at both the New Zealand Secondary Schools Championships and in the youth divisions at the New Zealand Athletics Championships.

While she has excelled in individual events, her future lies in the seven-event

'You don't usually do many heptathlons in a year because they are so draining.'

Phoebe Edwards

heptathlon. She competed at the World Youth Athletics Championships (under-17) in Colombia in the heptathlon, where she was on track for a top-15 finish after the first day of competition in July.

"My hurdles was good, high jump was good and I got a personal best in the shot put and had a really good 200m, so I was coming 13th after the first day," Edwards said. "The next day I did a PB long jump, but javelin was just not very good."

The overall finish of 23 out of 38 was still a great result and would only get better as her training improved.

"It's hard because I've only been doing it [heptathlon] for two years now, some of the European girls have been doing javelin and shot put since they were eight and were handpicked to be heptathletes."

Edwards has big plans for 2016, including a crack at the World Junior Ath-

letics Championships (under-19) and a move to a United States university.

"The big goal for my next season is to qualify for the world junior champs - it's pretty achievable because the standards came out a few days ago and they were 100 points lower than I thought they were going to be."

"I'll have this last season here in New Zealand and hopefully go to world juniors in July, and then head over to the States in August."

The aim of moving there would be to test herself against a high level of competition more often than she could in New Zealand, she said.

"You don't usually do many heptathlons in a year because they are so draining, but the level of competition will be so much better than here."

"When I qualified for world youths it was in Australia when there were good heptathletes to push you in each event and I got a big PB. You need that competition to push you on."

The end goal, like any track and field athlete, is to make it to the Olympics, and Edwards had taken inspiration from Kiwi heptathlete Portia Bing, who finished 16th at the senior world championships in August.

She has competed against Bing at a national level and few would bet against her doing the same at international level.

Billingsley chases his American dream

FOOTBALL

NOAH BILLINGSLEY will take his considerable footballing talents to the United States next August.

The Onslow College year 13 is taking a familiar route to many young New Zealand footballers in accepting a scholarship to a US university.

He'll attend the University of California, Santa Barbara from next August and play for the school's division-one Gauchos football team.

Billingsley made history when, as the youngest member of the Junior All Whites squad, he scored New Zealand's first goal at an under-20 World Cup in his team's 5-1 win over Myanmar at Westpac Stadium in June. "That was amazing, I didn't have to work very hard for the goal - it was a tap-in - but I was just happy I could score."

The goal helped book the Junior All Whites a place in the knockout stages, but they lost 2-1 to Portugal in the round of 16.

Billingsley's performances helped him gain the attention of Santa Barbara. "Before the World Cup I was looking



Wellington and New Zealand under-20 footballer Noah Billingsley will be attending the University of California Santa Barbara from next August.

to go over to a university - we were contacting coaches and looking for a school who would take me.

"Luckily the World Cup came around at the right time, so that sparked some interest from the coach from Santa

Barbara and it worked out really well." Before he goes over he will play for Waitakere United in the national league over summer, before returning to the Ole Academy in Wellington.

Billingsley won the male Footballer of the Year at the College Sport Wellington awards on Sunday night, recognition of what has been an outstanding year for him.

Emma Main (St Peter's College year 11) won the female Footballer of the Year at the awards after playing for the New Zealand under-20s at the recent Junior World Cup qualifiers, while she is also trialling for the under-17s to compete at their World Cup next year.

In other winter sports, Scots College and New Zealand Secondary Schools rugby captain Peter Umaga-Jensen won the male Rugby Player of the Year award, while Ayesha Leti-I'iga (Porirua College) won the female award.

St Pat's Silverstream's Tarquinn Alatipi was the Rugby League Player of the Year, while Sieni Mose (Wainuiomata High School) was the finalist and winner of the female rugby league category.

Allen excited about familiar pairing

KAYAKING

GETTING back to a familiar pairing will see Tess Allen return to her best canoe racing form.

The Kapiti College 17-year-old had an outstanding year competing in New Zealand, but went to the Canoe Sprint World Youth Championships in Portugal in July and was paired for the first time with Waitara's Cassandra Wilson in the K2 500 metres.

It didn't go as planned, with the pairing finishing last in their heat, 11 seconds adrift of first.

"We had a few issues with getting the boat moving and running because I hadn't paddled with the girl before and the way we paddled was very different," Allen said.

"But it was a great learning experience because it was quite hard mentally to get over that step of going from being so good to struggling so much."

"It was a hard environment to be in with it not working and being away from home and mum and dad, but having to work through those issues and not having the opportunity to give up. I



Kapiti College student Tess Allen competes during the 2015 Canoe Racing National Championships, where she won six medals, including two golds.

think that made me a stronger paddler and a stronger person."

It followed what had been her best national championships at her first crack at the under-18 division in February, when she won two golds in the K4,

a silver and a bronze when paired with Gemma Woolcock in the K2 and two bronzes in the K1.

She now has her eyes set on making the New Zealand team for both the Oceania Championships and world youth champs next year.

This time she wants to do it with long-time friend and Mana Kayak Club paddling buddy Danielle Watson.

"The goal is to make those teams with my partner Danielle and I would like to prove to everybody that I can do K2."

Allen won a College Sport Wellington award for her achievements, capping a strong year for Wellington college students on the water.

Hayden Robertson (Onslow College) and Bella Cordwell (Wellington East) scooped the Rower of the Year awards. Robertson was eighth at the World Junior Champions in the men's double and was a silver medalist in the under-18 singles at the Maadi Cup.

Cordwell competed in the New Zealand under-21 team which won the Rusty Robertson Cup against Australia, winning golds in the coxless four and eight at two regattas.

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