

COLLEGE SPORT



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SISTER ACT

Kerr duo are making names for themselves

CRICKET

THE Kerr sisters are going from strength to strength. Amelia (Melie), 14, has been on the radar for some time now, but her older sibling Jess, 17, has taken more of an interest in cricket since a serious calf injury put a temporary stop to her running.

Melie is the youngest and brightest talent in New Zealand women's cricket at the moment, with her legspinners helping the Wellington Blaze's win the domestic T20 title earlier in the year.

It led to a phone call from White Ferns coach Haidee Tiffen last week to inform her of her selection for New Zealand, who will play the White Ferns and Sri Lanka at the end of the month.

She will also train with the White Ferns for a week as they prepare to take on the tourists, which Melie said was good on two levels.

"I got a call from Haidee the day before it was announced and I was pretty happy, and then she said I get to stay on for a week to train with the White Ferns, which means I get a week off school, so I was even more happy."

"I was a little bit surprised [with the callup], but since I've been part of the [New Zealand Cricket] emerging talent squad last year there was always a chance I could get in."

She would go into the week with a fair idea of what to expect, having trained with the team earlier in the year.

"I went away in February with them for a week of training to see

what it's like and it was cool – when they train they really train with a purpose," she said.

"It's quite good to watch and see how you can take that into your own trainings and how to work hard."

While Melie's bowling is the most utilised part of her game at the top women's level, her batting has been ticking along nicely at school level.

In five innings for her Tawa College year 10 boys team at the start of the year, she scored 258 runs at an average of 129 with a top score of 107 not out.

"I don't really bowl for them. I open the batting and I've done quite well and I think I was the second top run scorer in the grade," she said.

She also played against her sister in the girls first XI, scoring 184 runs with an average of 92 in the T20 grade, with it only a matter of time before her batting proved in the women's game.

"Once I get older and stronger I'll be able to become more of a batter in women's cricket."

BOOTH sisters were part of the New Zealand under-18 indoor cricket team which came second at the under-18 World Series in Brisbane earlier this month.

Jess was player of the tournament, Melie was runnerup, while their Tawa College teammates Makaylah Mason-Jones, Roshani Thuraisingham and Kate Fenton were all part of the team.

Both sisters have been part of the Blaze's winter training squad, with Jess saying she had put more focus on her cricket in the past 12 months.



Sisters Jess and Amelia Kerr bat together for the New Zealand under-18 women's indoor team during the recent World Series in Australia. Photo: POWERSHOTS PHOTOGRAPHY

'The success she's been having has inspired me to work harder with my cricket, there's not really any rivalry.'

Jess Kerr on younger sister Amelia

"This year I've taken cricket a bit more seriously, with the [under-20] indoor World Cup last year. I loved that so much but I didn't train as much for it."

"I wanted to improve my skills and be a better player, so I worked quite hard with that. I got a bowling coach and a batting coach. Brent Arnel and Ivan Tissera. They helped me a lot with getting the skills right again."

Her injured leg had to be operated on, curtailing her athletics but giving her more time to put towards cricket, she said.

"Running has been my No 1 sport, but I've had the injury with that so it triggered me to go more into cricket as it doesn't seem to affect me with cricket."

Jess said the work she had done paid dividends on a personal level at the recent indoor World Series, although she was disappointed the team couldn't get past Australia in the final, losing 132-115.

"It was a bit of a bummer. We beat them by quite a bit in our first game [120-69] and qualified directly for the final, so we were pretty confident of doing well, but we just couldn't get it done on the day."

"The tournament had given her extra motivation to try and follow her sister into New Zealand outdoor colours."

"I'm enjoying my cricket, so who knows where that will go to."

"It would be awesome to play for the New Zealand women's side in the Wellington Blaze squad this year, so in the years to come making that team would be a goal and maybe the White Ferns after that."

She had a good start to the year for Tawa, scoring 152 runs in six T20 knocks at a strike rate of 161.

While her little sister has achieved more in cricket thus far, Jess was quick to dismiss any suggestions of a sibling rivalry.

"I'm really proud of her, she works really hard and I haven't done nearly as much work as her so it's a good example of how hard she works."

"The success she's been having has inspired me to work harder with my cricket."

"There's not really any rivalry – it's awesome to see."

SPORTS BRIEFS

CRICKET

Premier 1 resumes

St Pat's Town will be looking to continue on from their solid start to 2015 when first XI cricket restarts this Saturday. Having earned promotion to the top grade last year, they quickly shot to the top of the table at the start of this year. They continue their campaign away to fifth-place Hutt Valley High School, a team they beat by 48 runs earlier in the season. Second-place Onslow College face fourth-placed St Pat's Stream in the match of the round, while defending champions Hutt International Boys' School play Wellington College, a team they surprisingly lost to earlier in the year. Scots College and Tawa College will battle in what shapes as a relegation eight-pointer. The matches will be played on artificial pitches as the grass pitches are not ready, which could lead to some unexpected results.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Last eight

It's getting down to the pointy end of the Wellington college rugby league competitions this week. The first two quarterfinals of the senior Stephen Kearney Cup take place today, as St Pat's Silverstream face St Bernard's and St Pat's Town take on Porirua College. Tomorrow will see Bishop Viard up against Wellington College, while Wainuiomata High School play traditional rivals Taita College. The junior Johnny Lomax Cup has its final round robin matches on Saturday before the finals.

AWARDS

Entries close

Nominations for the College Sport Wellington Sportsperson of the Year awards have closed today. A full list of nominees will be printed over the coming weeks, with profiles of the top contenders from various codes to follow.

Wellington schools threaten Auckland powerhouses

NETBALL

WELLINGTON schools are close to breaking through the Auckland dominance of the national scene.

While they were unable to get past the juggernaut of Mt Albert Grammar, or Saint Kentigern College, Wellington's three teams filled third, fourth and fifth at the national tournament in Ashburton last week.

It comes on the back of four Wellington players being named in the New Zealand secondary schools team earlier in the year, which more than doubled the region's representation in the squad since 2007.

Wellington East Girls' College finished third at the tournament after losing to Mt Albert 44-27 in what was essentially a semifinal. Mt Albert went on to win their fourth successive title.

East's beat Wellington rivals St Mary's 33-20 in the third and fourth playoff.

East's coach James Laursen said he was rapt with the third placing, after the team overcame stomach bugs, migraines and having to stay half an hour down the road in Methven when all the Ashburton accommodation was booked out.

While the scoreline in the Mt Albert game didn't reflect how close the teams were, it was always going to be tough against a team boasting four New Zealand secondary schools players, with defender Holly Fowler and shooter Maia Wilson also signed for professional trans-Tasman netball championship teams.

"It was a hard contest against schools that have big budgets and basically scholarship their players in," Laursen said.

"[Mt Albert] are a beatable side. There is a lot of hype that goes with that team, so if you can try and play their hype down you can do well."



Wellington East's Tenika Leota was one of four players from her team who made the tournament team at netball's secondary schools nationals. Photo: MAARTEN HOLL/FAIRFAX NZ

"We were [down] 8-11 in the first quarter, so you just have to keep on going with that. They basically just got a few little runs on us and I don't think the score reflected the game itself."

The 17-goal margin was the closest any team got to Mt Albert, other than Saint Kentigern's 41-35 loss in the final.

The game went from 11-8 to 20-11 quickly in the second quar-

ter. East fought back, but were never within 10 goals after the score reached 28-18 midway through the third quarter.

"Their connections were strong throughout the court and were well structured and their midcourt were very fit," Laursen said.

"We had about 20 turnovers, so about five per quarter, and you just can't win games when you turn over ball like that."

Four East players were selected in the 14-player tournament team, with goal attack Tenika Leota joining the New Zealand secondary schools trio of Mila Reuelu-Buchanan (centre/wing attack), Marcelle Parkes (goal defence) and Tiana Metuarau (goal shoot).

Leota said she battled through migraines on the first day as the temperature soared to 28 degrees

Celsius in Ashburton, making it hot and humid in the EA Networks Centre where the tournament was played.

"On the first day I didn't react well with the heat. I had a migraine and I had to play through it on the second game and then pretty much after that I was straight into bed and asleep," she said.

Her shooting percentages dropped that day as she could barely see the net, but she made a strong comeback in the rest of the games and used her strong connection with Metuarau – who shot at more than 90 per cent – to great effect.

The team was elated to get one over St Mary's, after their blew a seven-goal lead at lower North Islands to lose by two. Leota said. "We were so happy to beat them, we all went in knowing we had to pay it back after lower North Islands final where we lost out composure."

Leota said the tournament result was a good way to end for the six year 13s, including herself, who leave the school at the end of the year.

While wing attack Mereana Makea is likely to play softball in the United States, many of the girls will be targeting the New Zealand under-21 team as their next step in their netball careers.

Reuelu-Buchanan has established herself as a strong candidate for the wing attack position in that team.

While St Mary's lost the third/fourth playoff game, they could be the strongest challengers to the Auckland throne next year as they will lose just three players, albeit the spine of their team in defender Colleen Faleafaga, centre Milaine Lefaoaseu and shooter Jermaine Howard-Vallance.

Faleafaga and Howard-Vallance were named in the tournament team, along with year 10 defender

Renee Savai'inaea, while fellow year 10 Ainsleyana Puleiata was close to making the team.

The team lost 41-29 to Saint Kentigern in what was also essentially a semifinal, with their coach Pelesa Semu saying they were unable to work their gameplan.

"They came out firing and are a well-drilled team and very experienced, but it just wasn't our day."

"Because of the calibre of players they have, we wanted to play it short and play it a little bit more in front and attacking the ball at the same time. We just got caught standing and waiting for the ball a couple of times and they just came through for the intercept."

The team achieved their goal of a top-four finish and would target an even higher finish next year, led by the likes of Savai'inaea and Puleiata.

"[Renee Savai'inaea] is an amazing athlete. I picked her up last year as a year nine student and she's just grown and grown and worked really hard and made both tournament teams at nationals and lower North Islands," Semu said.

"It's fantastic for her, she set out at the beginning of the week that she wanted to get there and she ticked that box."

Having three Wellington teams in the top five, plus Manawatu's Manukura finishing sixth, showed the strength of netball in the region, Semu said.

"There is some great talent coming through and Netball New Zealand have realised that as well."

Wellington Girls' rocketed back into the national picture with their first placing, in what was their first national tournament since 2010.

They are the last Wellington school to win a national netball championship after they triumphed in 1999.

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