Best talent on display

National encounter to launch finals

WATER POLO

BY CHRIS YOUNG

A TRIO of Albury's best water-polo players will star for the Victorian Seals when they visit Wodonga this weekend. Albury's Brooke Dickie will line up for the Seals in their clash with the Cronulla Sharks in the National Water-Polo League.

Young Achiever nominee Bridget Johnston and fellow Albury player Alhana Hofer will join her, in what will be Hofer's first senior call-up.

The NWPL visit is timed to be in conjunction with the first round of the Ovens and Murray league finals, and will kick off a huge month of water polo locally.

O and M qualifying finals are this weekend, followed by the elimination finals and grand final in subsequent weeks.

Waves pool will then play host to the under-14 national titles, as well as the all-star match on Monday, April 6.

Seals club president Steve Blunt said the club places heavy importance on getting out to regional areas, in an effort to promote the sport across the nation.

"We're part of a national league, and across all clubs our goal is to increase the profile of the sport on a national scale," Blunt said.

The NWPL games are scheduled into the first round of the Ovens and Murray finals series, and the 14 and under national championships and all star games will be at the end of the finals, so the two major competitions are going to bookend a very important part of the local season.

"From a Seals perspective, it's important for us to be in the Ovens and Murray area, which has a great history of producing elite athletes across many sports, and we want them in water polo and our club."

The women's games will feature three Olympic athletes in Rowie Webster, Holly Young and Nicola Zagame, while the men's Seals will be boosted by Australian goalkeeper and Olympian James Stanton.

"The women's match will be particularly interesting. Cronulla are in third place to our second, so this will be a good test to see where the girls are at," Blunt said.

"Both our men's and women's sides are doing well so far this season, having recorded six wins and one loss, but we haven't made finals yet, which is our ultimate goal."

There will be two games for each team, on Saturday and the other on Sunday.

The first women's match will be kicking off at 2pm at Waves.