



Michelle Willsher, pictured with children Jessie, Tomy and Chloe, is the winner of the inaugural Wally Foreman Award.

Dedication recognised

RILEY STUART and TENEILLE WATSON

A SOUTH West mother who has coached netball for 20 years is the inaugural recipient of the South West Academy of Sport's Wally Foreman Award.

Designed to recognise a community member for their contribution to sport, the award was presented to South West Jets head coach Michelle Willsher at the SWAS awards dinner earlier this month.

Willsher has been instrumental in the development of netball throughout the region in 2010, but also made her mark on metropolitan circles by winning the State Netball Reserves title back to the South West earlier this year.

That victory has paved the way for the Jets to be invited to field a side in the top flight State Premier League for

2011 — the first time that the club will have representation at WA's highest level in four years.

She said winning premierships and watching players develop were among the highlights of her experiences to date.

"It's hard to go past a premiership, but I get a joy seeing girls from the South West make State teams or go on to play for Australia like Susan Fuhrmann, I had a lot to do with her when she was younger," Willsher said.

"I enjoy seeing them grow from being young teenagers to be fantastic young women. That's why I do it."

Willsher said she was "grateful" to be recognised for her 20 years of service to netball in the region and that the Jets would do well now that they were

a three team club again with Under 18s, Reserves and Open sides.

"It's always a humbling feeling to be recognised," she said.

"It's a huge accolade for South West netball in general, not just for me. It's for all the people that I work with, the athletes, everybody.

"It definitely shows that South West netball is heading in the right direction. We'll do well when we step up to three teams next year."

Willsher, who is also a regional development officer for netball in the South West, said she felt motivated by the dedicated players she coached.

"I really enjoy giving the time to young women who are prepared to commit time to play at a high level," she said.

International visitors test SWAS skills

SOUTH West Academy of Sport hockey players had a unique opportunity to play international level games on home turf last month when they took on visiting Japanese teams.

The local talents put their skills to the test in two games against Japanese national Under-16 teams at Bunbury Hockey Stadium on November 29.

The matches were organised by SWAS head hockey coach Matt Mellor and SWAS sponsor FHE in the lead-up to the FHE Cup, an annual event held in Perth that attracts top junior teams from Japan and throughout Australia.

Mellor said there were a number of benefits in giving SWAS athletes the chance to take their game to an international level.

"It gives our athletes a chance to play against the best players from another country and put into practice what they have been training towards," he said.

"It also gives them the opportunity to interact with another culture and different styles of play.

"We don't get an opportunity to play very many games together as an SWAS group, so to be able



SWAS hockey player Preah Hetherington in action during a game against a visiting Japanese national U16 team.

to play against an international team was a great experience and a great build-up towards the FHE Cup."

The FHE Cup was held in Perth between December 2 and 5.

During the event, SWAS boys and girls teams played games

against Japan, as well as Western Australian Under-15 and 16 teams, and Under-16s teams from New South Wales.

Whiteman is a star on the rise

SOUTH West Academy of Sport scholarship holder Sam Whiteman proved himself to be among the emerging stars of junior cricket at the Under 19 national titles in Brisbane earlier this month.

The talented wicket-keeper/batsman captained the WA side to second place at the competition and was named in the team of the championship.

The skipper said he was "stoked" to be named in the team of the championship and praised his side.

Despite wild weather forcing play to be abandoned during the final round of fixtures, WA fared well and completed the carnival with 17 points, one-and-a-half points behind Victoria which took home the shield.

The event is part of the Cricket Australia pathway program and attracts emerging talents from around the country.



Sam Whiteman was named in the team of the championship at the Under 19 national titles in Brisbane.

Helping youngsters strike a balance

YOUNG people attempting to rise through the ranks of sport often have multiple responsibilities to juggle, including training, study and work.

To help them achieve success across their sporting, academic and career pursuits, the South West Academy of Sport is introducing a new program.

The Athlete Career and Education Program, sponsored by LandCorp, aims to provide

SWAS athletes with the skills needed for sport and life.

SWAS chief executive officer Bernice Butlion said the program would assist talented athletes in the region to achieve a balance between sport and life without compromising on excellence.

"We hope this program will help athletes make the transition into the high performance sporting environment and set them up

with great skills for sport and life," she said.

"Athletes will learn about their sporting pathway, self management and communication."

Butlion thanked LandCorp for coming on board as the program's sponsor and making the program possible.

"Research has indicated that sport is a great vehicle for teaching important life skills and we believe this program will be of

great benefit to SWAS athletes," she said.

"I would like to thank LandCorp for its generous support in helping to bring this program to SWAS athletes."

The introduction of the Athlete Career and Education Program is the latest development for SWAS which recently announced it was adding three new partner sports to its family of programs.

Proudly Sponsored by

swas south west academy of sport

Is Proudly Supported by:

Regional South Western Times