



# swas south west academy of sport



New Academy of Sport chief executive Bernice Butlion.

## New chief excited by academy potential

NEWLY appointed South West Academy of Sport CEO Bernice Butlion has been genuinely impressed with the academy's set up since her arrival, and is looking forward to implementing new strategies.

Arriving from South Africa last week, Butlion has spent time talking with members of the Department of Sport and Recreation and SWAS officials as the countdown to the academy's scholarship announcements gets closer.

She said the South West sporting community had already grown on her, adding the academy set up was highly professional.

"The support here is unbelievable in terms of local government and sporting groups," Butlion said.

"I think this professional set up is going to make my job a lot easier.

"At this point, we'll start discussing the sport programs and scholarships as early as next week."

Earlier this year, football, hockey,

soccer and basketball were chosen as the academy's four inaugural sports.

Butlion said the academy's next aim was to further implement the training programs and begin educating successful athletes on what SWAS had to offer.

"For me, to get these programs up and running is the next step," she said.

"We really need to start implementing things and begin looking after our regional athletes.

"I think it's important for them to

have an understanding of the academy system, because that is the system which supports them."

Butlion said she was also looking forward to working within the Australian sporting system, saying the nation's winning culture in sport would be beneficial for any athlete coming through SWAS.

She said her biggest hope was to see athletes from the region achieve national or global success.

# Hopkins an avid supporter

TWO time Commonwealth gold medalist and 2008 WA Thundersticks fairest and best Aaron Hopkins is a keen supporter of the South West Academy of Sport.

The hockey star from Busselton believes the academy will give young people the level of training and education they require to reach the next level of their chosen sport.

"It will do so by enhancing training and support at a local level in an effort to save up-and-coming athletes the burdens of travel and leaving their homes to pursue sporting excellence," said Hopkins.

Hopkins said it was also important young athletes received a high level of training close to home.

"I received similar assistance as a teenager in Busselton," he said.

"That extra training considerably helped my game come along in the early years."

Hopkins has carved out a notable career in hockey since those days growing up in the South West.

He has played for the Kookaburras and the WA Thundersticks, as well as competed in the 2002 Manchester and 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Hopkins' recent Thundersticks award, one of several to country players, proved once again the sport has a strong base outside the metropolitan area in spite of the South West Strikers men's relegation.

Former South West player and UWA star Shayni Nelson (nee Buswell) received the Charlesworth Medal as the season's fairest and best, with ex-Bunbury Cathedral grammar head boy Travis Taylor and Kate Denning named best youth players.



Aaron Hopkins, who took out the WA Thundersticks fairest and best award last week, is an avid supporter of the South West Academy of Sport after growing up in Busselton. PICTURE: GRANT TREEBY IMAGES

## Basketball players preparing to score goals

THE South West Academy of Sport's basketball program is gearing up, with Basketball South West in the process of selecting its inaugural squad of 20-25 players.

With up to 70 basketball juniors trialling for development programs, including the national

Intensive Training Centre Program, selectors are keeping a close eye on local talent with the view to picking an elite group for further development through SWAS.

Basketball South West's Steve Hawkins said invitations had been sent out to several associ-

ations in the region, with initial trials were held last week for both the ITC and SWAS basketball development programs.

"The top 20 to 25 players will be picked to go into the SWAS program, while the others will still be able to participate in other development programs," Haw-

kins said.

"In total, with the ITC program and SWAS scholarships there will be about 40 to 50 kids furthering their basketball.

"In the past we've had one coach for every 10 kids but now we hope to have one for every five, which should see even more improvement..."


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