

Win for athletes

By JEFFREY KITT

ELITE: South West athletes looking to reach the pinnacle of their chosen sport will be given a financial boost following the announcement of a new sports trust program.

South West Elite Athletes Incorporated was launched last Wednesday to assist individual sportsmen and women who were forced to move from the South West to reach international glory.

Professional triathlete brother and sister and former Newton Moore Senior High School students Ryan and Ashlee Bailie were named the inaugural ambassadors of the program.

The pair moved to Wollongong in New South Wales to chase their dreams of an elite triathlon career.

During Australian winter, the training continues as they fly to Vitoria in Spain to maintain peak physical condition.

The siblings said they were delighted with the funding which gave them a sense of security.

"What we do is a full-time job which limits our ability to create an income," Ashlee said.

"It's a massive lift off our shoulders to not worry where the next penny is coming from."

Ryan said he had worked during his gap year between schooling but chewed through the funds very quickly.

"It got to the point where we couldn't do it anymore," he said.

"We would just leap on to grants and apply for anything and anything - the money goes quick."

South West Elite Athletes Incorporated organiser and former neighbour of the siblings Ian Gibbs said he was inspired to create the fund after he saw Ryan leave Bunbury 18 months ago.

"We thought he would be gone for six to eight weeks but he got a full-time spot on the squad."

"When Ryan went away, I knew his hardship"

While training over east and internationally, the pair shared a single room and had little funds as they chased their dream of Olympic competition.

They endured 10-hour days of running, cycling and swimming, sometimes falling into bed at 10pm only to repeat the process the next day.

Mr Gibbs noted that in comparison, elite individual sportspeople were not supported in a similar way enjoyed by AFL players or university students.

"We aim to fill the gap between the South West Sport Academy and elite sponsorship," he said.

"This allows them to reach their full potential"

Selected athletes will receive two years of financial backing for travel and accommodation expenses on a needs-basis.

Mr Gibbs said the fund will look to support more athletes in the future with the support of further sponsors.

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Ashlee Bailie



Week in the life of a triathlete...

- 30km weekly average in pool
- 300km weekly average on bike
- 100km weekly average running
- Nine-and-a-half hour training days

Ryan Bailie