

Sports set to benefit

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THE first four sports have been announced and the benefits forecast following the official launch of the South West Academy of Sport last Friday.

Football, soccer, basketball and hockey were all included in the inaugural intake after a lengthy selection process that saw applications from 10 sports narrowed down to a final four.

Representatives from each sport spoke at Friday's launch, with special guests and stakeholders travelling from Perth and throughout the South West to attend the event.

The evening also provided an opportunity to announce Australind basketball product and Australian squad member Mark Worthington as patron for the academy's basketball program.

Worthington, who was named NBL Rookie of the Year in 2006 and won gold with the Boomers at the Commonwealth Games, praised the academy concept and said he hoped it would provide a launching pad for other aspiring athletes to follow in his footsteps and compete at an elite level.

"The South West Academy of Sport is an excellent initiative that will help young players from the South West achieve their dreams in basketball," Worthington said.

"I have great memories from my days as a junior in Australind and the opportunity to represent my family, town, State and now my country is a great honour and one that I will always remember long after I have stopped playing."

SWAS board chairman Don Punch said the academy was honoured that Worthington had accepted the role as basketball patron.

"Mark, who is set to represent Australia at the Olympics in August, will make an outstanding role model for young participants in the program," he said.

"We are honoured he has accepted the role."

The basketball program will allow the number of local players involved in elite training to increase from seven to 25, while also boosting the number of



Australian basketball player and Australind local Mark Worthington has been named as patron of the South West Academy of Sport basketball program following the official launch last Friday.

high level coaches developed in the region.

Benefits are also anticipated for football, soccer and hockey development in the South West, with Football Development Manager Shane Atherton saying the academy would pave the way for representative teams to

play in the WAFL 15s and 16s development carnivals.

Soccer's Football West chief executive Garry Chandler echoed the sentiments of other stakeholders, saying the academy would provide an important step in the pathway to elite competition. He also said it was a timely

launch with the Perth Glory Youth League set to commence this year.

Hockey Development Officer Megan Pollard said the program would improve hockey in the region by boosting the number of local players selected to compete at State level, as well as the number of high level coaches.