



Bunbury footballing youngster Jacob Smith will be among those representing WA at the upcoming School Sport Australia Football Championships.

## Five teens head off for national footy champs

FIVE South West Academy of Sport athletes will fly the flag for Western Australia at the upcoming School Sport Australia Football Championships in Maroochydore.

The event attracts students from throughout the country and this year Riley Hutchinson (Manjimup), Corey Kirkness (Capel), Brayden Lawler (Bunbury), Lachlan Micale (Busselton) and Jacob Smith (Bunbury) will be among more than 300 teenagers taking part.

A highlight of the school sports calendar since 1923, the annual competition sees students from States and territories clash for national supremacy.

The representatives from SWAS are already in training for the championships, which are being held between July 25 and August 1.

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# Academy buoyant as first birthday comes up

THE South West Academy of Sport has emerged as an important training ground for young athletes throughout the region since the launch of its partner sports programs on July 4 last year.

Talent development pathways have been set up, visiting sports stars have lent their support, and athletes have achieved accolades at State, national and international levels.

SWAS board chairman Don Punch said it was exciting to see the academy develop and there would be plenty to celebrate when the candles on the academy's first birthday cake were blown out next month.

"The academy has helped 147 athletes pur-

sue their sporting dreams in its first year," he said.

"This is an outstanding effort and a reflection of the hard work of the athletes, coaches and program coordinators, as well as the generous sponsorship from local groups and businesses."

SWAS chief executive Bernice Butlion said there was much to look forward to as the academy moved into its second year of operation, including an inaugural awards night to recognise the achievements of SWAS athletes.

"The annual awards night will be held in November and will be our chance to publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of our

young sportsmen and sportswomen," she said.

Butlion said SWAS would continue to boost the potential of athletes in the region as it worked to strengthen its partner sports programs in football, soccer, hockey and basketball.

"We've got a good project here — I'm passionate about it because sport changes lives," she said.

The South West Academy of Sport is the first regional sports academy in Western Australia. It was established to help the region's athletes reach their potential through the provision of training programs, scholarships and access to specialist services.



Eaton basketballing talent and South West Academy of Sport athlete Carey Watkins has been chosen as part of a group of country West Australians to compete at the Under-16 Australian Junior Basketball Championships in Tasmania.

## Eaton basketball tyro riding high

THE Under-16 Australian Junior Basketball Championships in Tasmania next month will mark the first national competition for rising Eaton basketball talent Carey Watkins.

The 14 year old is part of a group of country West Australians selected to compete at the tournament at Ulverstone in July, following successful trials in Perth.

Watkins, who was just 13 when chosen for the team, said he was looking forward to the

chance to step up and test his skills against the best young basketballers from around Australia.

"It will be great being able to play at that level of competition," he said.

Selection for the Western Australian country team competing at the championships is the latest in a long list of achievements that belie the age of gifted athlete Watkins, who

captained his football team to a premiership last year.

He is an inaugural member of the South West Academy of Sport's basketball program and can be seen on court representing the Junior Slammers and Eaton Basketball Association.

Watkins has also attended three camps in the past six months as part of the National Intensive Training Centre Program where he was one of the youngest participants.

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