



Olympic hopefuls

Kirsty McPaul

IN OCTOBER two local equestrians and good friends, Craig Matthews and Clint Beresford of Bega, took part in a qualifying event at the National Showjumping Championships in Canberra.

The event in which they were hoping to qualify for was the 2010 Youth Olympics which will be held in Singapore this August.

Being only open to 17 and 18-year-olds, Craig and Clint entered the competition knowing that this opportunity was one too good to pass up.

The thought of representing your country at such a young age was an exciting prospect for the boys who are both members of the Bega Showjumping Club.

The aim of the qualifying event was to gain a Certificate of Capability (COC) which would then make them eligible for selection onto a short list.

To gain a COC, competitors had to complete four showjumping rounds at 1.20m in height with eight faults or less.

This was achieved by approximately half of the 27 young riders who competed including Craig and Clint.

Following the initial qualifying rounds, several months

passed without news of selection.

The Matthews and Beresford families continued to travel around Victoria and New South Wales following the major showjumping events on the eastern circuit.

Both boys attended the Sydney Royal Easter Show and an invitation only "Showcase of Showjumping" event in Richmond in a bid to stay in the eyes of the selectors.

It was a huge surprise when one afternoon Craig's mother Julie checked her emails and discovered that both the Bega boys had been selected into the top five shortlist.

Mrs Matthews immediately contacted Clint's mother Jenny to share the fantastic news.

The email stated the five selected riders were required to attend a one day selection camp in Sydney which was held on May 6.

Clint said he was very surprised to hear the news as he thought the caliber of his competition was high and that being from a rural area, he may have been overlooked.

Craig said "it felt really good" to be in the running for selection.

If selected to go to the Olympics, competitors will

have to compete on borrowed mounts and will have to swap throughout the event.

Craig said he believed the selectors chose this short list of riders because of their ability to ride and adapt to many different types of horses.

This skill is one that rural based riders usually develop from an early age as it is quite typical for country children to "have a go" at anything which includes riding any horse that may be available in the hope of finding "a good one".

While it is an exceptional achievement for the boys to make it to the top five, unfortunately only one rider can be selected.

The top five attended the selection camp in Sydney two weeks ago under the watchful eye of two selectors.

They were required to ride their own horse over various showjumping courses and then swap horses with each other and demonstrate their ability to ride a horse that they are unfamiliar with.

Craig's top string horse was out of action at the time and he had to borrow a horse just for the trial.

He thanks Brett and Christie Clarke for lending "GH Tigerlilly" to him at late notice so that he could contin-



• Locals Clint Beresford (left) and Craig Matthews are vying for selection at the 2010 Youth Olympics.

ue to "pursue his dream". The two boys said they were quietly confident in their performances.

Now life returns to normal for the 17-year-olds who will wait patiently for the announcement of the sole Australian representative that will be going to Singapore.

Craig and Clint are great mates who have been friends since they both started kindergarten at Bega West Public School.

Both of them transferred to the Sapphire Coast Anglican College where Clint is currently studying Year 12 in between training his horses every day.

Craig is now living in Camden where he is working

with a highly renowned horse-breaker and young horse trainer.

Both boys started their riding careers at the Bega Pony Club and are now mentored by very successful showjumpers.

Grant Hughes of Canberra took Clint under his wing at a young age and has taught him not only how to improve his riding and competition skills but also many other important aspects of horse management.

Clint is now an established farrier thanks to his extensive work experience under Hughes' watchful eye.

The Matthews' family association with John and Shelley Kelly of Camden

started back when Craig's oldest sister Sam started competitive showjumping.

Now the Kelly's are Craig's employers and he credits his success to the coaching and all-round horse knowledge he has received from them.

Craig and Clint thank their families for their continued support.

The announcement of the young rider who will represent Australia at the 2010 Youth Olympics will be made next week.

With two out five possible contenders being from Bega, the odds are surely in their favour.

Both Craig and Clint said the "next best option" would be if the other gets selected.

Outstanding tennis finals on display

THE Bega Valley Toyota autumn night tennis competition last week produced great tennis with six of the eight matches being very tight results with four big games being the highest winning margin.

Players are advised all four division finals are programmed for tomorrow

night with division one and two to start at 7pm and division three and four to begin at their normal 6.30pm starting time.

Division One

Grant Smith's ANZ Bank team has continued its good form to win their semi-final

32/28 over Oliver Batten's Tarra Motors team with the sets level at three-all.

Smith, Nathan Batten, Alistair Clark and Craig Chauvier were pressured throughout the contest with Oliver Batten, Dick Blacka, Jye Rose and Catriona Cole

winning two of the first three sets 6/5, 6/5, and going down 5/6 to lead by one game at the halfway mark.

Oliver Batten played extremely well to hold Smith in the early sets, however, Smith and Craig Chauvier combined well to

take control of the semi-final with a 6/1 win over Batten and Cole.

The last two sets were shared with 6/4 wins to each team which gained Smith's ANZ Bank combination a place in the final.

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