Tennis star Murray set to court Alice

Doug Booth and Sarah Rohweder

ANDY Murray of Scotland may never have been to Alice Springs but the world’s best tennis player will be playing for the Red Centre at the Australian Open.

Wimbledon champion Murray’s campaign began on Tuesday when he beat Japan’s Go Soeda who was representing the Western Australian town of Alfred Cove.

Alice Springs finished seventh on the Top Tennis Towns list for the AO (Australian Open) Blitz.

Tennis Australia visited 104 towns across Australia before the Open in a bid to spread the tennis gospel.

Schools and tennis clubs were encouraged to register as part of the AO Blitz.

Matt Roberts has been tackling the hard task of hosting many national and international events, but if he wins, it means tennis is going to become an even bigger part of the community,” he said.

The town with the winning men’s and women’s champion will receive a community party for the townspeople.

Other NT towns to adopt the world’s best tennis players during the Open include Palmerston (women’s 12th seed Roberta Vinci of Italy), Coconut Grove (men’s 18th seed Kevin Anderson of South Africa) and Nhulunbuy (Mirjana Lucic-Baroni of Croatia).

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“Andy Murray is a very hard hitter,” Roberts said.

“He is in the hard half draw of the Open including Rafael Nadal, so he does have his game, but we are fairly confident he’s got a great chance.

“It will be fantastic if he does win because it means Tennis Australia will throw a massive party for the entire town and everyone is invited – even Andy is on the list, but I don’t think he will be there.”

Mr Roberts said Murray’s win would not only call for a celebration, but would also promote tennis in the local community and push participation rates.

“Tennis is already on the map as a well known and generally popular sport and we have hosted many national and international events, but if he wins, it means tennis is going to become an even bigger part of the community,” he said.

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