**CRICKET**

Jordan McArdle

**NEXT month’s Imparja Cup Indigenous cricket tournament in Alice Springs will have a Big Bash League flavour.**

‘Three exciting BBL-listed prospects will represent their home States in the week-long event, which kicks off February 9.’

Melbourne Stars’ Ben Abbatangelo will skipper the Victorian side for the third time, while fellow BBL players and involved himself in training sessions, team meetings, some games and recovery sessions. ‘It’s been an unbelievable experience so far. I’m fairly involved with the side except for the travelling side of things,’ he said.

‘They’re all good blokes and have been really helpful at training, giving me tips on where to bow at them and where their strengths and weaknesses are. ‘Training in the country and then stepping up to Scorchers training is certainly an eye-opener. ‘I’ve grown up watching a lot of these players like Hogg and Kol, so it’s great to get the chance to train with them.’

Collard’s debut Imparja Cup was really enjoyable, it was good to see how many Indigenous people actually play the game.’

He said he was looking forward to returning to the Red Centre following the second straight season, this time with an added advantage. ‘My first Imparja Cup was really enjoyable, it was good to see how many Indigenous people actually play the game,’ he said. ‘I think (training with the Scorchers) is helping my game. ‘I’m getting a lot fitter and my fielding has certainly improved.’

Perth Scorchers Talent Manager Brett Jones described the emerging quality as really worthwhile. ‘It’s been an unbelievable experience so far, I’m fairly involved with the side except for the travelling side of things,’ he said. ‘We’ve got these three kids on BBL rookie lists as well as Josh Lalor (Sydney Sixers) and Dan Christian (Brisbane Heat).’

The Imparja Cup has become a clear pathway for emerging Indigenous cricketers to... be offered rookie contracts.’

Stewart said former Queensland Bulls-listed right-arm paceman Worrin Williams was likely to line-up for the Sunshine State. ‘Hopefully I can get a few first-grade games for a WACA club next season and go from there.’

**Cup’s Big Bash Cup**

*Big Bash League players Ben Abbatangelo (Melbourne Stars), Ryan Lees (Hobart Hurricanes) and Hayden Collard (Perth Scorchers) will play in next month’s Imparja Cup*

*Picture: ROBERT PREZOSIO*

**YOUNG STARS FIRE AT CHAMPS**

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Jordan McArdle

WEST batsman Jacob Diani made a big batting start to his under-17 National Championships in Adelaide.

The classy left-hander top-scored with 63 in Northern Territory’s 10-run loss to Queensland on Monday.

His impressive knock came of 79 balls and included six boundaries.

NT was bowled out for 146, chasing 27 for Victoria.

Jacob made a start in NT’s second match, scoring 12 in his side’s 108-run loss to New South Wales on Tuesday.

The Territory had a bye on Wednesday and is halfway through its two-day clash with hosts South Australia.

Federal Asbuild allrounder Tabatha Saville is also paddling up in a national event.

Tabatha was selected in South Australia’s female under-18s side in Ballarat.

She wasn’t used with the ball as Amanda Wellings’ (4-45) and Stacey Oates (3-10) tore through the WA batting.

SA won the match comfortably, routing WA for 130 before chasing down the total with seven wickets in hand thanks to a half-century from opener Tahila McGrath.

The team’s round two match was against New South Wales yesterday.

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**Victoria hopes seasoned cricketers will boost its chances for Imparja contest**

**CRICKET**

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**Victoria has named its 13-man Imparja Cup squad for next month’s national tournament in Alice Springs.**

‘Noozle Toenggort Tani’ will be hoping to improve on last season’s third place finish through a good mix of experience and talent.

The squad includes five Victorian Premier Cricket first grade representatives, with Northcote’s Ben Abbatangelo back to captain the team for a third campaign.

He will be joined by Essendon pair Fletcher Stewart and Josh Eaton, Greenvale Kangaroos’ Alex Kerr and Melbourne’s Damon Egan. Fresh faces in the squad include former Melbourne University top-order batsman Worrin Williams, Warrnambool’s Ryan Lees and Hobart Hurricanes and the Hurricanes’ Ben Abbatangelo back to captain the team for a third campaign.

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