Hot contest to make grade

Jordan Gerrans
CRICKET

WITH the grand finalists already decided in the Alice Springs Cricket Association A-grade one-day competition, the attention turns to the lower grades and the run into their deciders.

With four games left in the B-grade and C-grade one-day competitions, grand final positions are wide open.

Federal AShurld lead the B-grade ladder after six completed rounds with 27 points. West are second on 24 points.

The Demons have one more win so far this season than the Bloods, but are five points behind with a higher percentage, sitting on 1/91 while the Demons are at 1/108.

Gapwek Works are third on table with 15 points and within striking distance of a grand final place.

PROMBUILD Rovers have a bit of work to do, sitting fourth on six points.

In Round 7 matches this weekend, Rovers will look to improve their ladder position against the Bloods at Head Street. While Works and the Demons will meet at Flynn Reserve.

With four rounds to go in the C-grade one-day competition, all four teams have a realistic chance to play in the deciders.

NT’s Short to boost WA squad firepower for repeat Imparja tilt

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DEFENDING Imparja Cup champions Western Australia have named a strong squad for this year’s tournament in their pursuit for back-to-back triumphs.

The Sandgropers claimed their first Imparja Cup title since 2010 last time out as they held their nerve against New South Wales in a thrilling decider at TIO Traeger Park Oval.

Last season’s Lord Taverners’ indigenous Cricketer of the Year Michael Bailey and current Perth Scorchers Community Rookie for the fourth edition of the BBL will again lead the side.

At just 22, Bailey has made scores of 86 and 75 so far this year in Perth’s First Grade competition playing at Gosnells and has previously been a member of the Australian indigenous cricket squad.

Former Palmerston and NT Strike squad member Darcy Short is also in the squad, along with former Fremantle Dockers midfielder Keren Ugle, Midland-Guildford batsman Benan Bennett and 2014 Cup final man-of-the-match recipient Aaron Muir from Bayswater-Morley.

Victoria will again be led by Waratahs and NT Strike all-rounder Ben Abbatangelo for the fourth year in succession.

Abbatangelo has been in good form for Northcote this season, reaching 338 runs before Christmas and was the Melbourne Stars community rookie in last season’s BBL and the National Indigenous Development Squad captain.

Abbatangelo is looking for an improved effort in this year’s campaign.

“As a squad we have put in some really good performances over the last three years but have just lacked the consistency to bring home our first Imparja Cup,” he said.

“Fingers crossed, we can change that this year.”

Essendon Cricket Club product Josh Eaton has stepped into Abbatangelo’s spot at the Melbourne Stars and will return to the Red Centre next month.

Eaton has taken 12 wickets in the Victorian grade competition this season and was also selected in the preliminary 2014-15 National Indigenous Development Squad that toured Darwin for the Top End Cricket Carnival earlier this year.

The Vics have selected a youthful side including Greenvale Kangaroos Alex Kerr, Essendon’s Fletcher Stewart, Melbourne second XI representative Damon Egan while Wade and Travis King are new inclusions.

The brothers, from Warrenbayne Cricket Club, are the second set named in the side, joining Patrick and Liam Jackson.

“It is great to have both Wade and Travis involved this year,” Abbatangelo said.

The 2013 Imparja Cup starts on February 8.

Rugby finals countdown begins

THE Central Australian Rugby Union action returns this Saturday night with two clashes that will have serious implications on the finals structure.

With seven rounds to play before the semi-finals in early March, jostling for places will begin tomorrow at Anzac Oval.

The ladder leading Eagles led from start to finish in their 50-14 win over Dingo Cubs to complete round eight before the Christmas break, while the Kiwi Warriors survived an early scare to beat Devils 51-27.

With Warriors and Cubs in pursuit of the red-hot Eagles at the top of the CARU table, the winner of their clash at Pen will go a long way to claiming second spot come finals time.

In the early game starting at 5.30pm, the Eagles will come up against the Devils who are yet to record a win.

The Demons will face Works at CDU Oval.

In the A-grade, West and Federal AShurld are set for the grand final with one round to play.

The two qualified grand finalists will play a decider on Saturday at Jim McConville Oval.

Works will play Rovers at Albrecht Oval.

The A-grade grand final will be played on Sunday, January 25.

Batman Darcy Short will be playing for WA in the Imparja Cup.

Picture: SUPPLIED

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The Eagles will be targeting their first A-grade premiership since 2014.

“With just four rounds to play, we need to keep winning to be in the hunt,” Eagles coach Stephen Shreeve said.

“With the details we need to do to play well, the players are motivated to put in the hard yards to win a Grand Final.”

The Kiwi Warriors will be looking to finish second and play the Demons in the grand final after a convincing Round 7 50-14 win over Dingo Brothers.

“Despite the big win, we will have to be on top of our game to finish second,” Kiwi coach Jesse May said.

“It’s our last chance to make the grand final with two games remaining.”