

School Sport Australia cricket titles: Meet the 24 U12 NSW stars in Ballarat

With ties to former Test stars, the state's top primary school cricketers are heading to Ballarat for the national titles. Meet 24 boys and girls from NSW at the School Sport Champs.



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NSWPSA U12 girls cricket team after winning the School Sports Australia Championships in Adelaide, 2024. Supplied: NSWPSA

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The state's top primary school cricketers are about to take a significant step in their developing careers as NSW fields two teams at the School Sport Australia 12 Years and Under Championships in Ballarat.

Renowned for helping launch the careers of Australian legends Steve Smith (Alfords Point Public School) and Ellyse Perry (Beecroft Public School), this year's tournament will take place over seven days from Saturday, October 25.

A powerhouse in this space following successful trips to Darwin and Adelaide, the girls' team head to Victoria chasing a third consecutive title. For the boys, it's a golden opportunity to claim the state's first trophy since 2009.

Teams were selected from playing groups representing the state's CIS schools, two Catholic zones and 12 public school regions.

The final squads of 12 were selected earlier this year at the completion of the NSWPSSA championships held across regional NSW. The boys' team was selected in Maitland, while the girls' squad was chosen on the Central Coast.

Contested across 20 and 40-over formats, meet the young stars representing NSW.

NSW GIRLS

COACH: KATE OWEN (KURNELL PUBLIC SCHOOL)



NSWPSSA U12 girls. Back (L-R) Belinda Allard (manager), Chloe Goraya, Dristi Abhijith Rao, Diva Patel, Avni Kannan, Myra Rathore, Kate Owen (coach). Front (L-R) Avantika Rathore, Emily Melis, Elsie Vlok, Ayra Gite, Aiyonce Sapumanage (absent: Arabella Bassingthwaighe, Mackenzie Platt). Picture: Jason Hosken

DRISTI ABHIJITH RAO (RIVERBANK PUBLIC SCHOOL)

A key member of last summer's title-winning team, it's no surprise that Dristi lists Adam Gilchrist as her favourite cricketer. Exceptionally reliable behind the stumps, she secured 17 dismissals for Sydney West on the Central Coast, and the Kellyville Supersonics junior also shone at the top of the order, scoring two fifties.



(L-R) Dristi Abhijith Rao and Avni Kannan. Picture: Jason Hosken

AVNI KANNAN (IRONBARK RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOL)

An avid cricket fan, Avni has played six seasons with Hills Barbarians and admires Jasprit Bumrah. While she bowls medium in-swing, it's her batting that truly sets her apart. A master at rotating the strike, the right-handed opener was dismissed only once in four innings on the Central Coast, scoring two half-centuries for Sydney West.

CHLOE GORAYA (CLAIRGATE PUBLIC SCHOOL)

A Blacktown Warriors junior, Chloe is pinpoint with her leg-spin and explosive with the bat. She claimed a mountain of wickets at the NSWPSSA champs and showcased her batting prowess by smashing 50 runs off 25 balls against a quality attack for Sydney West. She has also met her favourite cricketers, Usman Khawaja and Phoebe Litchfield.



(L-R) Chloe Goraya and Aiyonce Sapumanage. Picture: Jason Hosken

AIYONCE SAPUMANAGE (OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS, ROUSE HILL)

Still a year young, this Castle Hill junior is making waves as an all-rounder. Consistent with the bat, she admires Brian Lara, often watching his highlights on YouTube, and rates the cover drive as her favourite shot. Equally impressive with the ball, Aiyonce swings it away from the right-handers.

AYRA GITE (ST CATHERINE SIENA, PRESTONS)

Affectionately known as the “Queen of LBW”, Ayra is a Hoxton Park junior known for her unrelenting precision with the new ball. In a defining moment on the Central Coast, the Pat Cummins fan and accomplished cross-country runner delivered a stunning spell for MacKillop, taking 4/2, which included three maiden overs.



(L-R) Ayra Gite and Myra Rathore. Picture: Jason Hosken

MYRA RATHORE (ARTARMON PUBLIC SCHOOL)

Almost impossible to remove, the Lane Cove junior cemented her spot with three unbeaten fifties for Sydney North. A massive fan of Sachin Tendulkar and Ellyse Perry, Myra also delivers handy off-spin and offers a safe pair of hands in the covers.

AVANTIKA RATHORE (ARTARMON PUBLIC SCHOOL)

A regular wicket-taker for Sydney North with her right-arm pace, Avantika is a North Sydney Bears junior who draws inspiration from fellow quicks Brett Lee and England's opening bowler Lauren Bell. When the run rate needs a boost, she's more than willing to go all out with the bat.



(L-R) Avantika Rathore and Elsie Vlok. Picture: Jason Hosken

ELSIE VLOK (LANE COVE PUBLIC)

Just like her favourite player, Ellyse Perry, Elsie can just about do it all. Equally talented at AFL and football, the tenacious wicketkeeper also excels with the bat, often unleashing her favourite pull shot to great effect. Representing Sydney North on the Central Coast, she walked away with two impressive half-centuries.

EMILY MELIS (CAMMERAY PUBLIC SCHOOL)

In a squad brimming with talent, Emily's left-arm pace is a serious point of difference. With a lethal inswinger to right-handers, the North Sydney Bears junior was consistently among the wickets for Sydney North. Another standout performer across multiple sports, she also represents the Macarthur Bulls at junior level football.



(L-R) Emily Melis and Diva Patel. Picture: Jason Hosken

DIVA PATEL (ROUSE HILL ANGLICAN COLLEGE)

Easily the tallest in the squad, Diva has no trouble generating express pace with her long levers. A self-confessed Mitch Starc fan, the Schofields junior is set to back up for another campaign with the Blues, where she'll once again target the stumps with her lethal inswinging deliveries.

ARABELLA BASSINGTHWAIGHTE (COOTAMUNDRA PUBLIC SCHOOL)

One of two players in the squad to represent Riverina at the recent U15s Country Championships, Arabella is a pace-bowling all-rounder heading to Ballarat in fine form after an unbeaten 53. Highly active year-round, she also enjoys tennis, hockey, touch football, swimming, and athletics.



(L-R) Arabella Bassingthwaighte and Mackenzie Platt. Supplied: NSWPSSA

MACKENZIE PLATT (YOUNG PUBLIC SCHOOL)

The other half of the Riverina connection, Mackenzie is a lively left-armer and right-hand batter. A product of the Wagga City Cats, this Phoebe Litchfield fan also enjoys a variety of sports, including soccer, swimming, and touch football.

NSW BOYS

COACH: JASON ELLSMORE (DORCHESTER EDUCATION AND TRAINING UNIT)



NSWPSSA U12 boys. Back (L-R) Rob Jarvis (manager), Ryan Cregg, Johnny Bull, Isaac Murray, Will Watson, Zachary Meacock, Declan Snyman, Jason Ellsmore (coach). Front (L-R) William Bryan, James Cowan, Fergus Glass, Andre Liyanage, Samuel Cooper, Archer Lach-Newinsky. Picture: Jason Hosken

WILL WATSON (CRANBROOK JUNIOR SCHOOL)

Stronger and more experienced, Will returns for another campaign better equipped both mentally and technically thanks to ongoing guidance from his father, former Aussie all-rounder Shane Watson. A hard-hitting opener who bowls decent pace, the Easts Dolphins junior heads south in good form following a recent knock of 87.



(L-R) Will Watson and Isaac Murray. Picture: Jason Hosken

ISAAC MURRAY (RAMSGATE PUBLIC SCHOOL)

A right-hand opener who loves to cut, Isaac is a Caringbah Sports junior who secured his spot following a succession of consistent performances for Sydney East at the Maitland carnival. A huge Steve Smith fan, he stays fit during winter by playing AFL.

JAMES COWAN (CRANBROOK JUNIOR SCHOOL)

Another player with Test connections, James is the nephew of former Australian opener Ed Cowan. A left-hander who bats in the top order like his favourite player David Warner, the Easts Dolphins junior sets himself apart with his dangerous right-arm pace.



(L-R) James Cowan and Zachary Meacock. Picture: Jason Hosken

ZACHARY MEACOCK (SACRED HEART, MOSMAN)

A fan of Alex Carey, Zachary is a keeper and a dependable performer at the top of the order. Earning his second chance with the Blues after a commanding unbeaten 54 for MacKillop in the trials, he enters the new season in peak condition following a stint in representative AFL.

ARCHER LACH-NEWINSKY (BOWRAL PUBLIC SCHOOL)

The well-travelled all-rounder is hard to pin down. When Archer isn't scoring top-order runs in Bowral, he's likely delivering sharp outswingers for the Helensburgh Cricket Club. A multi-talented athlete and softball representative, he caught the selectors' attention with a dominant 75 for South Coast in Maitland.



(L-R) Archer Lach-Newinsky and Fergus Glass. Picture: Jason Hosken

FERGUS GLASS (THE SCOTS SCHOOL, ALBURY)

One of four regional reps in the squad, the Lavington Panthers junior booked his ticket to Ballarat with a dazzling 82 not out for CIS. A gifted all-rounder who bowls right-arm medium pace, Fergus is already on the AFL radar after turning out for NSW at this year's nationals.

SAMUEL COOPER (HELENSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOL)

Boasting a booming cover drive like his hero Ricky Ponting, Samuel is a keeper/batsman making waves at the top of the order. Hit a top score of 46 in Maitland and solidified his reputation with a swag of stumpings.



(L-R) Samuel Cooper and Ryan Cregg. Picture: Jason Hosken

RYAN CREGG (OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART, RANDWICK)

Not much gets past this Randwick junior. A right-arm quick, Ryan is set to take the new ball in Ballarat, emulating his favourite bowler, Josh Hazlewood. A powerful all-rounder and one to watch in the middle order, he impressed with a commanding 65 for MacKillop in Maitland, followed by a blistering 72 in Canberra that featured 13 boundaries.

WILLIAM BRYAN (OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY, WYOMING)

When coach Jason Ellsmore wants to shake things up, there's a good chance the ball finds its way to William. Representing the Polding schools in Maitland, the Central Coast junior from Lisarow Ourimbah dazzled with his right-arm leg-spin, finishing as the leading wicket-taker of the carnival.



(L-R) William Bryan and Declan Snyman. Picture: Jason Hosken

DECLAN SNYMAN (SYDNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL)

The team's pocket rocket, this Lindfield junior delivers serious pace and is poised to set the tone with the new ball. A fan of Pat Cummins, Declan made a statement at the Maitland carnival by hitting the stumps with the very first ball of an innings, and taking 3/5 in a tournament where he was nearly impossible to hit off the square.

ANDRE LIYANAGE (MELROSE PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL)

A product of the Kellyville Supersonics, this Shane Warne admirer is carving out a reputation with his cleverly disguised leg-spin. A natural competitor, he showcased his batting prowess by rescuing Sydney North in a last-wicket stand, smashing an unbeaten 36 off just 22 balls.



(L-R) Andre Liyanage and Johnny Bull. Picture: Jason Hosken

JOHNNY BULL (RICHMOND CHRISTIAN COLLEGE)

Combining power and finesse, Johnny is a crafty off-spinner from Ballina in the Northern Rivers region of NSW. A consistent performer for CIS, his accurate 'darts' are tough to score from. A devoted fan of Travis Head, Johnny is also capable of teeing off with the bat and enjoys shooting hoops in his downtime.

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