

INVERCARGILL TO BE TOUTED AS BADMINTON HOTSPOT

Badminton Southland will be using the upcoming Oceania championships in Invercargill to bid for the city to become the next high performance training centre.

Badminton Southland spokesman and World Badminton Federation vice president Nigel Skelt said all work had now been completed on the 10 wooden-floor sprung courts ahead of the tournament which will take place from February 15 to 28.

“James (Eunson) and Anna (Rankin) have both tested the courts and are really thrilled with them.”

The ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust have just donated \$10,000 and \$8,000 respectively towards the tournament – on top of the \$145,000 granted to refurbish the courts.

The tournament will see 200 to 300 players from countries all around Oceania competing for top honours in both team and individual events.

Badminton's elite have to play in this tournament to qualify for the World Championships, he said.

“That means we'll have all the very best players from Oceania playing here.”

There will also be a players training camp and events course (for administrators) held before the tournament starts.

The main event will be held in Stadium Southland however the courts just metres away will be needed for training.

Badminton Southland was using the tournament to entice members of Oceania into considering Invercargill as the region's training venue.

“Now we have a world-class facility quite clearly seeing the facility in action is the key issue for promoting it.”

The Oceania committee would not only need to be convinced about the training venue it would also take into consideration the standard of education available and cultural support for players who may stay a year.

“We are working really hard with the Southern Institute of Technology,” Skelt said.

ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust chairman Alan Dennis said the financial assistance granted could reap long-term rewards.

“This truly is an investment in a project that could benefit a wide sector of the community.

“The success of this tournament is vital in ensuring Invercargill can be seen as a leading contender to become the first Oceania high performance training base.”