King Cole eyes Rio

HE IS QUIETLY CONFIDENT

GABRIEL Cole’s last Paralympic Games campaign in London four years ago came to an early halt after he suffered a hamstring injury.

But the former Mercedes College student, born with a partially formed left arm, is determined to bounce back as he vies for a spot on Australia’s Paralympic team, headed to Rio de Janeiro in September.

The Mitcham & Hills Messenger is profiling the sprinter as part of its Road to Rio series, launching today to celebrate our athletes hopeful of heading to Brazil.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Councillor apologise for abusive comment

A MITCHAM councillor has apologised after claiming boys are at risk of being abused in toilets at a Blackwood oval. Cr Karen Hockley made the comment during a budget discussion, where she was pushing for the toilets to be upgraded.

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DEVELOPMENT

Approval for $80m development lapses

The future of the controversial Cremorne Plaza complex on Unley Rd is in doubt after the developers missed a deadline to start work. The company behind the $80 million complex must now reapply if it wants the development to go ahead.

See Page 5

MITCHAM

SANFL rule change blow for small clubs

MITCHAM Football Club has criticised the SANFL’s decision to allow clubs to field extra junior players, saying it could signal the end for struggling sides. Club president Simon Ballard said the change would send players to victorious clubs.

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 Orientation Walk

Join the Principal and Heads of School on an Orientation Walk to experience how our environment can help realise your child’s potential. To register please phone or visit www.mercedes.catholic.edu.au

6 APRIL 9.30am
**SPORT**

**Cole faces up to challenges**

Celeste Villani

PARALYMPICAN Gabriel Cole is determined to use his success to empower young boys to set goals and overcome personal challenges.

The 24-year-old, born with a partially formed left arm, often returns to the Mercedes College, to give inspirational talks to Year 9 students.

He shares his athletics story as part of the college’s Being Boys: First Steps to Manhood program.

“There is a lot of pressure on young men... so boys need to learn to stand up for themselves,” Cole says. “I tell them about my story and about how they can try to be confident, set goals and discover what they want to do.”

Cole is confident of qualifying for Australia’s 2016 Paralympic Games team to compete in the 100m sprint in the T-47 category for people with arm disabilities.

“I still need to qualify (for Rio) at Nationals in Sydney at the start of April,” Cole says. “I have to get about 11.0 seconds... at the moment I am running 11.17 seconds.”

Cole competed at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in India, the 2012 London Paralympics, the 2013 World Championships in France, and the IPC Athletics World Championships in Qatar last October. Disaster struck at the last Paralympic Games, when Cole injured his hamstring and did not progress past his heat.

However, the scars were healed when he had a podium finish in France, winning silver.

Mercedes College Old Scholars Association chief executive Anne Morse praised Cole’s commitment to his sport, and to motivating boys to do their best.

“He reminds students that if they have a dream, to follow it and work hard,” Ms Morse says.

When Cole is not on the track or giving motivational speeches, he can be found pursuing his other passion, painting.

Cole, along with friend Lucas Croall, is behind screen art and streetwear brand Beyond Killa, which is inspired by contemporary abstract art.

The duo also paint murals, with their work on display at Mama Jambo cafe, in the Adelaide CBD.

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**ROAD TO RIO**

Chris Day, Deputy Editor

REPRESENTING Australia in the green and gold is the pinnacle for any athlete.

To do so at an Olympic Games, watched by billions of people around the globe, must be a spine-tingling experience.

Qualifying for the Olympics, let alone winning a medal, boils down to milliseconds and millimetres on the day.

Before that, comes years of hard work and sacrifices from athletes and the families, coaches and friends who support them.

This year’s Olympics start in Rio de Janeiro on August 5 and the Paralympics are on from September 7-18.

About 50 elite athletes from across Adelaide have a strong chance of making it to Rio.

For some there will be elation, for others heartache.

This week, Messenger Community News launches its Road to Rio series.

Between now and the Games, our reporters will bring you the stories of local athletes seeking Olympic glory.

We will track their journey from training, to qualifying events and, hopefully, the podium in Rio. We will talk to the parents, coaches and clubmates who share in their Olympic dreams.

And, above all, we will celebrate the grassroots sporting connections that play such a vital role in achieving success on the world stage.

The Road to Rio starts now. We hope you come along for the ride.