

Sport | Basketball

# Tauranga basketball camp a slam dunk

Friday, December 23, 2022 • By Raurukitahi Mane-Wheoki



An invitational-only basketball camp being run this month in Tauranga by Whai Academy has brought together future basketball players from across the motu and Australia.

15-year-old Kupah Ipo (Tūhoe) who lived in Australia has been supported by his parents to attend the camp and says that training and development is a lot faster here than in Australia.

"Training has been intense to be honest," says Kupah.



The two-day-camp offers specialised training that focuses on character building, fitness, basketball techniques and life skills.

Mount Maunganui College Head Girl Keilani Horne says the key lesson she's learned is mindfulness.

"To be mindful on what shot to take, and be confident with it. Stay calm and keep your head in the game," says Keilani.



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There are currently 55 participants attending the camp, about 75 percent of those taking part have whakapapa Maori.

"Right now, we are creating pathways towards both education towards college overseas or playing in either NZ or Australia in the NBL leagues," says lead coach, Mel Bennett.

"We have the Co-Founder of NetScouts joining us today virtually to share his wisdom on college recruitment to the US," she says.

"This is part of Whai Ara, as an organisation we are looking to tour overseas to provide both exposure and athlete/coach development."

The Tall Blacks and Tall Ferns are currently ranked 30 in the world of the senior mens and womens basketball rankings. One of goals of the Whai Academy is to get more players in at a professional level to help lift Aotearoa's world rankings.



"As a new organisation we feel that it is very important to establish our values and identity. Everything we do on court will be done with a high level of energy and intensity, which means the gym will be loud and players will be working extremely hard," says Whai Director of Coaching, Alex Stojkovic.

"Decision making will be developed using small sided games with either an offensive and defensive focus. We also demand a high level of respect between the players and staff as well as a commitment to service, which means adding value to others."

The next Whai Academy camp will take place in December 2023 and it is an annual event.





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