

Diamond Valley Leader

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Anzac spirit

Photo gallery from across the valley » Pages 8-9



CFA snub

Brigade alleges council snub in fires » Page 7



Keen for chases and aces

Michael, 13, and Joshua, 11, kept their eyes on the ball at Bundoora Tennis Club as they competed for a spot on centre court at next year's Australian Open alongside 60 other pint-sized tennis fanatics. And if the pair successfully pass through the three rounds of try-outs, it won't be all star-spotting. Ball boys and girls can expect to work for more than eight hours, and often in sweltering conditions. But when you're metres from your tennis idol, these kids say they wouldn't have it any other way. See Page 13 for more.

Picture: JANINE EASTGATE N43WP099

News

Boy's bid just to be ball kid

THERE was sweat, grunts and lots of giggles as dozens of pint-sized tennis fanatics battled to snare a spot on centre court in next year's Australian Open.

Michael Farneff was one of 60 kids competing for a spot as ball kid through try outs at Bundoora Tennis Club last Tuesday.

Michael, whose favourite player is Roger Federer, said the possibility of being close to his tennis idols was exciting. "I'll be able to get a feel for the players close up and pick up new strategies for my playing," the 13-year-old



Michael Farneff wants to be a ball kid. N43WP099

said. But selection is tough. Kids completed an initial online application, covering their knowledge of and interest in tennis, to be invited to last week's session.

Results from the try outs will be analysed and some children invited to a second round of trials to determine the 290-strong squad.

And once on the court it's not all star gazing.

Ball kids can work up to 12 hours a day - remember that marathon five-setter last year between Lleyton Hewitt and Marcos Baghdatis that finished at 4.33am.

Not that any of this bothered Michael. If the experience was going to help get him closer to his favourite players, it would be worth it.