

Bentley's drive reaps rewards

JUST three weeks into the track and field season and Moama teenager James Bentley has qualified for the 2020 Athletics Australia national championships.

Bentley, 15, ran a personal best of 51.29 seconds for the 400m, below the qualifying time for nationals, in the latest round of Flack Advisory Bendigo Region competition.

The Eaglehawk Athletics Club young gun will run in the under-17s class at the Australian titles in Sydney next March.

Last Saturday's 400m showdown with South Bendigo's Jake Hilson was a highlight of Athletics Victoria Shield League for Bendigo region clubs at the Latrobe University Bendigo athletics complex.

"I didn't expect to run that sort of time (51.29) last Saturday," Bentley said after his latest training session at LUBAC.

"Having Jake in the race was a massive help," he said of being against a stronger and more experienced sprinter.

"I tried to stay with Jake for as long as I could and maintain that sort of pace for as long as I could," said Bentley.

In his third year of competition with the Hawks, Bentley rates the 400m as his favourite event.

"I believe the 400 is my best event, but having the endurance to run an 800 is a major goal, too."

In the one-lap dash of the 400m, Bentley said there were several key areas to focus on.

"A fast start off the blocks is always important, as is timing your run.

"It's a battle of tactics, and speed."

Highs of the 2018-19 season were setting the Residential and Centre record for the under-15 400m of 51.94, and the Centre record for the under-15 200m of 24.04.

Athletics is a big commitment for James and parents Tony and Sue.

"They are my greatest supporters."

The Bentleys are regularly on the road from Moama to Bendigo for training and competition.

"At the moment I train in Bendigo once a week, and at Moama another night."

Throughout winter, Bentley spent a fair amount of time in the gym at home building leg and upper body strength.

Squats and leg extensions were among the drills in the training program set up by athletics coach Terry Hicks.

The signs of those workouts are shown in Bentley's work off the starting blocks and in his races, whether it be 100, 200, 400m, or in the relays.

"It's my third season being coached by Terry Hicks," said the St Joseph's College Echuca student.

"Staying focused, never giving up, and always being prepared to keep going in training or races are some of the things I have learnt a lot from Terry."

Bentley marked another footy season with Moama by being league best and fairest in the Shepparton and District Football League's under-16s competition and he played at centre half-back as the Magpies were runner-up in division two.

Now the focus is to keep on going faster in each race on the athletics track.