

# STUDENT WINS GOLD AT GAMES

Jeff Casey has been playing soccer since he was six years old, so the 18-year-old was thrilled when his years of training and practice finally paid off at the Australian Paralympics Youth Games in Melbourne in October.

Jeff, who was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Left Hemiplegia at six months of age, was over the moon when his team picked up the Gold medal at the Games.

He began playing soccer as a primary school student as part of his physio, and to enjoy the social side of team sports, when he started school at Hill Top Public School in 1997.



At the beginning of this year Jeff, who has attended Mater Dei since 2004, wanted to continue with his soccer, but he was forced to play in the local men's division as there were no teenage teams available. "We decided to try to find a disability team or something more on Jeff's level for him to play. We found the Cerebral Palsy Sport and Recreation Association (CPSARA), and through them, Jeff was chosen to be part of the NSW team in the Cerebral Palsy 7-a-side football team for the Australian Paralympics Youth Games in Melbourne," said his mum Wendy.

On October 5 Jeff flew to Melbourne with his teammates to compete at the games. Out of the first six games, NSW managed to win three, draw two and lose one game.

"During the first three games Jeff started on the bench, then came out half-way through each half, but by day three he was in the starting line up. When the NSW team made it to the finals, the boys were a bit nervous knowing they had to play Queensland – the only team they had lost to. However, they needn't have worried, as they won the game one-nil and took home the Gold medal," Wendy said.

Jeff is still playing local soccer for Hill Top Soccer Club, where he is playing in Men's Division 3, and he was recently selected as "Player's player" for his team.

"I think Jeff's time at Mater Dei and participating in their overnight camps and residential program, gave him the confidence to stay at the motel with his teammates. The sportsmanship and mateship that Jeff showed is testament to his schooling, and the friendships that he has made at Mater Dei and we will be forever grateful to them," Wendy said.

