



■ Welsh under-15 squash champion Ciara Richards

Ciara setting sights on international title

SQUASH champion Ciara Richards, 14, has stepped up her fitness training with her sights on an international title.

Ciara became under-15 Welsh Junior Open champion in March - one of only two home winners at the championships played in Cardiff among a worldwide entry of more than 150 players.

The promising young athlete from Aberdare won the Welsh title with an 11-9, 13-11, 11-7 win against Scotland's Georgia Adderley, while Rhys defeated Dylan Moran (Ireland) in straight games.

Ciara turned to the British Closed tournament before targeting the Swiss Open in December. The Welsh Closed and British Open events are also in the off-

SQUASH

ing.

She is benefiting from a specialist fitness regime, devised by Cardiff strength and fitness coach Simon Harling, which helps young athletes achieve all-round athletic fitness and ability and is the first in Wales outside of professional sport.

Simon, who trains professional Welsh athletes at his Elite Fitness centre in Fairwater, said: "Ciara is a shining example of the work we are doing to improve the sporting performance of youth athletes.

"Traditionally, there is a heavy emphasis on sport-specific training, neglecting the need to achieve peak performance by developing

all fitness components.

"Our Fitter, Faster, Stronger regime aims to overcome training imbalance by developing the bilateral movements and competences needed for successful squash performance. It also reduces the risk of injury."

Ciara's father, Lee Richards, said: "Since Ciara has been working on the Elite Fitness regime her overall fitness, stability and flexibility have greatly improved. It has enriched her squash performance skills and competitiveness."

The programme, for young athletes aged between 12 and 16, complements sport-specific training they are already engaged in.

"Parents and coaches need not be concerned because there are no detrimental effects in combin-

ing the two," Simon said. "We are effecting changes in a very short time, producing dramatic improvements in sports performance."

Fitter Faster Stronger provides training every day from 4-6pm, allowing young athletes the opportunity to supplement their current sports training with additional athletic development training.

In the same way that the performance of professional athletes is scrutinised, the programme assesses, screens and monitors the young people taking part.

This can be done more effectively by restricting numbers to groups of eight.

For more details on the program visit www.elitefitness.co.uk