



Trialist: Papatoetoe Rangers Kirsten Hurley, front, is fighting for a place in the Counties Manukau under-21 team for the national champions in Nelson in July.

Teams battle for places on netball league

By ALAN APTED

Winning a place in Counties Manukau's regional Premier Netball League is not the cakewalk it once was.

The league's popularity has reached new heights.

A record 18 teams have entered the league's two-day qualifying tournament at the Papakura Netball Centre at Bruce Pulman Park on June 4 and 5.

Only nine spots are available, three in the premier division and six in division two.

Netball Counties Manukau business manager Nicole Terrill is stoked.

"It's a fantastic situation to be in," Terrill says.

"When the league started seven years ago, it was dominated by teams from the Papakura Netball Centre."

"This year five of the six centres that make up Counties Manukau Netball – Papakura, Howick Pakuranga, Manurewa, Pukekohe and Waiuku – have teams entered.

"Three of those teams are

from Pukekohe which is absolutely fantastic."

Terrill says the league took a while to establish itself but it has really taken off since it moved indoors.

"The girls really like playing indoors."

"The quality of the netball is better and teams are now able to have bench officials and scorers on the sidelines, something they weren't always able to do outdoors."

This year's league starts on June 10 at three centres, the Otara Leisure Centre, Rosehill College and the Manurewa Netball Centre.

Matches will be played on Friday nights at 6.30pm and 8pm.

Defending champions Papatoetoe Rangers and Aztec Premiers and Mellons Bay get automatic entry to the premier ranks. That's because they were the three top teams from last year.

Manurewa Rugby, winners of division two last season, will be looking to get promoted this year.