



INSPIRATION: Kyle Chalmers.

Chalmers in line for another accolade

MATT WINDLEY

THREE Olympic stars, two inspiring Paralympians, a trail-blazing jockey, a rugby league immortal in waiting and a history-making rugby sevens team will all vie for "The Don Award" next month.

The Sport Australia Hall of Fame yesterday released its shortlist for one of Australia's most prestigious awards, with our athletes' feats in Rio fresh in the mind as well as prominently placed among the nominees.

South Australian swimmer Kyle Chalmers (100m free-style) and rower Kim Brennan (single sculls) both won gold in August and have been nominated as a result.

Anna Meares became Australia's most successful female cyclist by winning a sixth Olympic medal in the keirin and inspired a nation — one of the award's key hallmarks.

All-star wheelchair tennis athlete Dylan Alcott — winner in doubles and singles in Rio — and canoeing gold medallist Curtis McGrath (KL2 200m sprint) wowed us during the Paralympics, while the women's Olympic rugby team won the maiden sevens gold medal.

Away from Brazil, Johnathan Thurston's all-round rugby league feats — not least his premiership-winning field goal for North Queensland in the 2015 NRL grand final — have resulted in nomination, while in becoming the first female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup, Michelle Payne's heroics on Prince Of Penzance have also been recognised.

"The Don" will be awarded on October 13.

One-day series chance for the next generation

THE five-match one-day series against South Africa presents the chance for a new cricket superstar to emerge, according to Australian coach Darren Lehmann.

Australia, who landed in Jo-

hannesburg yesterday with three uncapped bowlers, has used 28 players in the 26 ODIs since last year's World Cup.

With only three Test stars in the squad for the ODI series in captain Steve Smith, his

deputy David Warner and Mitch Marsh, Lehmann believes the tour is a chance for players like Daniel Worrall, Joe Mennie and Chris Tremain to launch their international careers.

"Someone gets to make a name for themselves in a high-quality series," Lehmann said.

"We've got some good young fast bowlers, we'll only know (how they'll handle it) at the end of the series against a

quality side. We're hoping they step up and we're sure they will. They swing the ball and they've got some variations."

Australia has won 17 of 26 matches since reclaiming the World Cup last March.



DAN'S UP FOR THE FIGHT

Ricciardo gunning to bridge gap on Mercedes

VICTORY IN SIGHT: Australian Red Bull driver Daniel Ricciardo at the launch of a model of his ultimate Formula One track in Perth yesterday. The 30m Scalextric track, created with help from Fox Sports, features his favourite corners, chicanes and sweeping sections from tracks all over the world.

REBECCA WILLIAMS
PERTH

DANIEL Ricciardo has warned Mercedes should be looking over its shoulder for 2017, saying he expects to be right in the title fight next year as he closes in on his first race win this season.

Fresh from his second in the Singapore Grand Prix, Ricciardo said he was confident he would break through as Red Bull sets itself up for a serious challenge to the all-conquer-

ing Mercedes outfit next year. Ricciardo claimed his fourth podium from his past five races after he finished just half a second behind Nico Rosberg in a dramatic finish under lights in Singapore.

He has clearly established himself as the best of the pack chasing the dominant Mercedes pair of Rosberg and Hamilton, sitting third behind them in the championship standings.

But with new Formula One aerodynamic regulations set to come in to play next year that

are expected to enhance Red Bull's prospects, Ricciardo expects the team to close the gap again on Mercedes and be firmly in the championship mix.

"I definitely believe I will be prepared for it," Ricciardo said yesterday.

"Hopefully we come into the season with the package to do it and if so I believe I can come out in Melbourne and get it done from the get-go.

"I think we have made a big step (this season). From where

we were last year, we've probably more than halved the gap (on Mercedes), so we've found more than 50 per cent of what we've needed to.

"Probably for next year they are (looking over their shoulder). I think they are probably a bit curious, hopefully a little bit worried about what aerodynamic gains we can make. They know our car's strong, we'll see - hopefully we are."

Ricciardo remains in pursuit of his first race win since his breakout 2014 season when

he claimed victories in Canada, Hungary and Belgium.

He has been on the podium five times this year, but believed a win was not far away as the championship heads to Malaysia next week.

"I still believe we can do it, it's probably not that realistic in dry conditions - if Mercedes finish the race then they are probably going to win in those conditions," Ricciardo said.

"I feel like we deserve a win this year, I absolutely 100 per cent feel we do."

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