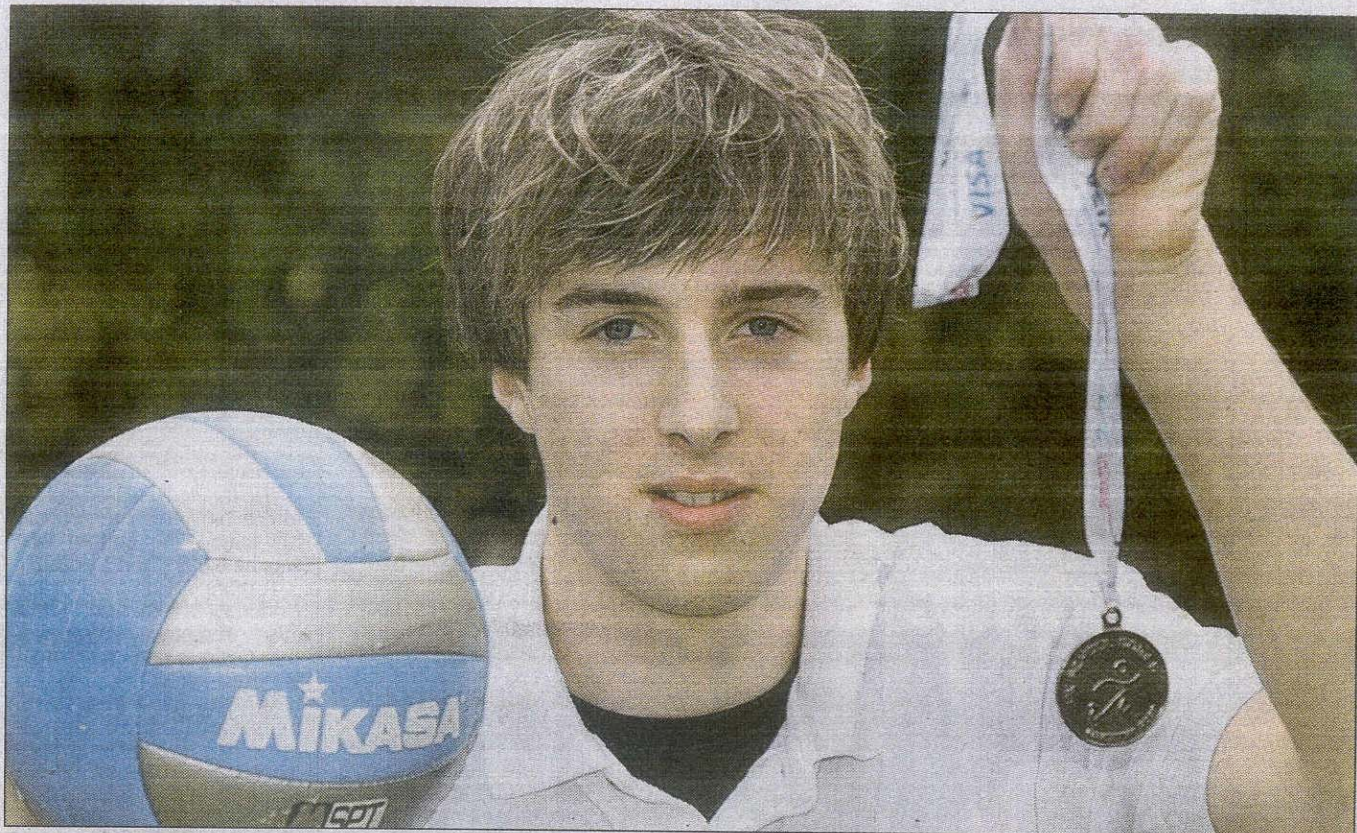


Volleyball



Exeter's Matthew Rowles shows off the silver medal he won at the UK Schools' Games

GARETH WILLIAMS EE280907_GW06_03

Volleyball hero Matthew aiming for London Olympics

BY JON LEWIS

EXETER volleyball player Matthew Rowles is gunning for the 2012 London Olympics after winning a silver medal at the UK Schools' Games.

The 17-year-old from Countess Wear and his England South teammates finished as runners-up to England Midlands in the 2007 tournament in Coventry.

Rowles admitted it was disappointing to miss out on a gold medal, but pointed out the event was part of a learning process helping prospective Olympians prepare for the London Games.

But first Rowles says he is concentrating on making a successful transition from the England Under-18 squad into the national Under-23 set-up.

The Exeter College pupil said: "I have been told if I keep working hard and go for it my chances of making it into the Under-23 squad are high.

"It's exciting to know something big could happen in the future.

"It makes me want to be at the Olympics in 2012. It would be amazing. That's my goal."

Rowles has six months left as part of the Under-18 side and he has been representing England

for two-and-a-half years. The teenager first picked up the game when friends persuaded him to join Torexe, in Exeter, about five years ago.

Rowles went on to represent the club before progressing to play for the South West regional team and then England.

He said: "I just joined for the sport, a hobby. I didn't realise you could go this big with it until I started playing for the South West and England.

"I could turn professional. Some of my friends have played for Great Britain and moved to Australia.

"It's something that would

definitely appeal to me in the future."

At the School Games in Coventry, England entered several teams to give more members of their development squad a chance of playing competitively.

Rowles' England South Under-17 outfit beat Scotland West/North, Scotland East/South, Northern Ireland and England North on their way to the final. During the round robin stage they lost to England Midlands 2-1, and it was the same story in the final as the Midlands won 25-15, 25-14 to take the trophy home.