

## Vujasinovic lights up Hoad Cup



All eyes will be on Serbian champion Vladimir Vujasinovic when water polo heavyweights Partizan Belgrade clash with Barbarians in the Tom Hoad Cup at Bicton Pool today.

Vujasinovic is the latest in a long list of European stars who have flexed their considerable skills in eight previous chapters of the unique WA tournament.

Considered one of the most accomplished players in the history of the sport, Vujasinovic lined up in gold-medal winning teams at the 2005 world championships, the 2001, 2003 and 2006 European championship, the FINA World League from 2005 to 2008, the FINA World Cup in 2006 and Mediterranean Games in 1997.

Though he hasn't had gold-medal success at the Olympic games, Vujasinovic was a member of teams which claimed a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics and bronze in 2000 and 2008.

Hoad, an eight-times Olympian who was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in December last year, described Vujasinovic as the best player to have appeared at the event named after him.

"He's been the best defender in the world in the past 15 years in my opinion," Hoad said yesterday.

"Partizan won the European Cup this year and as a defender he was the highest goal scorer and best player of the tournament.

"He is also a fantastic team player and one of the best brains."

Hoad said aspiring juniors could learn a lot from watching the gifted 38-year-old.

"We have a lot of young kids coming along and they should have a look because Vladimir Vujasinovic is an inspiration in terms of how he attacks and how good a team man he is," he said.

Triple Olympian Tim Neesham has come out of retirement to bolster Fremantle Mariners in their games against Japan, China, Partizan Belgrade and the Barbarians.

A powerful left-hand shooter, Neesham is a key inclusion for the host team which has played in all eight Tom Hoad Cup grand finals but not won the title since 2005.

The 30-year-old was a permanent fixture in the national team last decade, playing at the Olympics in Sydney, Athens and Beijing, and was also a member of Mariners teams which won the Tom Hoad Cup in 2004 and 2005.