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# Test cap after life's short ball

Picture: LAWRENCE PINDER N40PP512

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**Sport** | Annika Smethurst

## Ashes sport for determined youngster

A PLUCKY Upwey High School student who has battled bullying has been selected to represent Australia as part of the 2012 Australian Blind Cricket Team.

Daniel Pritchard (pictured), 17, will travel to England for the Ashes Tour next month as the youngest member of the Australian squad.

The Tecoma teenager is almost completely blind, but showed impressive form on debut in the one-day selection series against New South Wales, taking five wickets for six runs, off five overs.

His performance impressed selectors who invited Daniel to join the national squad.

Daniel is ecstatic: "Being selected to represent Australia against England is like a dream come true."

Blind cricket sees a team of 11 take to the field using an audible ball — made of hard plastic and filled with ball bearings.

The ball is bowled underarm and has to bounce twice before being

hit so the batsman can locate it.

Born with a degenerative eye condition, Daniel's eyesight deteriorated in his early teenage years. He is now completely blind in his left eye and has between six and 17 per cent sight in his right eye.

He said his early teenage years were difficult as he grappled with losing his sight.

"I was going through a frustrating time when I lost my eyesight. "I felt very beaten down. The

teachers weren't really prepared for what was happening, students bullied me and I was in a very negative space.

"I found sport was very beneficial, I got to meet other guys that knew what it was like and just to be around them and to have that understanding was amazing.

"I never really liked cricket much before blind cricket as I couldn't see well enough to be able to play very well."

Daniel said he loved not only the game but the camaraderie both on and off the field.

He will take time away from his VCE studies to travel to the Ashes from May 30 to June 5.

If successful, he hopes to represent Australia again in December at the Blind Cricket World Cup in India, which is only played every four years.

**Daniel is Free Press Leader's junior sports star of the week.**

To nominate a sports star, email us at [freepress@leadernewspapers.com.au](mailto:freepress@leadernewspapers.com.au)

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