

Sun, sand but where's the surf?

BENDIGO is hours from the coast, but today it will be a magnet for dozens of Olympic beach volleyball hopefuls.

The regional city will host Olympians, world champions and top junior players for the first leg of the Regional Volleyball Series.

The three-day tournament, which will be played on courts in Williamson St, will give competitors a good idea of their form ahead of the 2011 Olympic qualifiers for the London Games.

Players from around Australia have

Katherine Firkin

entered the tournament, including triple Olympian Josh Slack, world champion Brett Richardson, and World Tour silver medallist Bec Palmer.

Slack, who is the national champion with partner Richardson, said he was thrilled with the high profile line-up.

"For the first event of the season it's a very strong field which is great," Slack said.

"To be able to get out there and play against other people who are a chance at the Games is a good measuring stick for us."

Slack, who is confident of making his fourth Olympic Games team, said he and Richardson would go on a world tour next year to collect as many international ranking points as possible.

"Next year is crucial for us because we need to stay in the top 24 in the world to make a place in the Olympics," Slack said.

"That's why events like the one this weekend are really important because it gives you a chance to gauge how your training is going before the really serious competitions start up."

But in a blow for tournament organisers, Olympian Tamsin Barnett was forced to withdraw yesterday, citing migraines.

Bendigo is the first of four venues to host the regional series, which moves to Geelong, Frankston and Moama in the new year.

No time for pine

Grantley Bernard

CHRIS Anstey has one NBL Best Sixth Man award and the Melbourne Tigers centre doesn't plan on winning another.

Although Anstey will come off the bench tonight against the Cairns Taipans in his first game since off-season hip surgery, the former NBA player wants to be back in the 'Tigers'

Back where she belongs:
Canberra Capitals stalwart
Lauren Jackson resumes her
WNBL career against the Perth
Lynx tomorrow night.

