

NETBALL: Trio of King Edward's teams set sights on success in regional finals

Three 'n' easy for High School girls

By Lisa Smith

A BIRMINGHAM school, renowned for its academic results, has proved it is also pretty impressive when it comes to sport by providing three teams for the regional finals of a national netball tournament.

Staff at King Edward's High School for Girls in Edgbaston are cock-a-hoop with their pupils' achievements, particularly as the school has not had three teams in the finals before in living memory.

In all three age group sides – Under 14s, Under 16s and Under 18s – have qualified for the regional finals and will represent Birmingham in the National Schools Tournament this weekend.

The school now has high hopes one or more of its teams will succeed in progressing to the prestigious national finals in April.

All three teams finished in the top two places following the hard fought rounds of the Birmingham Schools Tournaments to earn their places in the regional finals.

The Under 16s, coached by Ian Smith, and the Under 18s, trained by head of PE Catrin Coleman, each finished second by the narrowest of margins to King Edward's Camp Hill after a comeback on goal difference.

The KEHS Under 14s, coached by Sue Davies, went one better, winning their Birmingham Schools age group championships, beating Bishop Walsh into second place.

"We're absolutely delighted," said Smith.

"It's a terrific coup for one school to qualify all their teams through the Birmingham tournament and we've certainly not been represented in the Midland regional finals at all three age groups for at least 40 years."

Coleman was equally delighted and admitted the school was now training hard for this weekend's finals which will take place at



The captains of King Edward's all-conquering netball teams are U-11 16-year-old Pija Desai who leads the U-16s, Philippa Stacey, aged 14, who leads the U-14s and 16-year-old Malaha Eri who leads the U-18s.

Aldridge. She said: "I'm just so proud of their achievement."

"Although we've got some excellent individual players who've reached county and regional level, this wasn't about any one player dominating her

side. But the result of three strong squads showing outstanding teamwork."

All three squads are now in hand training and they are hoping their secret weapon – former international

Joan Hunter, who is head coach of the successful South Birmingham Club, where several of the girls play – will be a huge boost.

She is lending her expertise in coaching the girls.