

# Young Andy is fire on ice

**LIZ WALSH**

HE'S only 14, but Adelaide figure skater Andy Yao has already been described as an artist with talent beyond his years.

This week, he will debut on the world competition stage when he represents Australia at the International Skating Union's Junior Grand Prix in Russia.

The only Australian boy competing at the event, the Temple Christian College student flew out of Adelaide yesterday – bound for the Russian city of Chelyabinsk.

His coach, Richard Laidlaw, said Andy's rare talent would hopefully see him become the first South Australian figure skater to compete at a Winter Olympics.

"I'm an elite-level figure skating coach, who has trained many athletes to state and national titles, however, rarely have I come across as truly a talented skater as Andy," Laidlaw said, adding that the teenager could already perform triples of the six competition jumps.

"I've coached him since seeing him skate at a general session at the IceArena six years ago, taking him from two-foot skating to his triples and next year it's planned for him to be doing quads (four aerial spins with a single jump).

"If he achieves this he will be the third Australian-trained skater to do so and the youngest Australian to achieve it.

"This would make him the only South Australian to ever perform a quad jump in a competition.

"He is an artist on the ice."

The three-time state champion and one-time national champion trains at Adelaide's IceArena every day after school – and before school four days a week – and does off-ice training including strength work, every day, in a bid to become strong enough to master the quad jumps.

"I love the speed of figure skating and I love performing," Andy said.



**ARTIST: Andy Yao takes to the world stage in Russia this week, representing Australia in figure skating. Picture: SARAH REED**