

GIRRAWEEEN Athletics Club is celebrating Australian selection for one of its runners as he makes his international debut on the Gold Coast this week.

Nick Hanna, 22, was set to contest the 5000m and 10,000m events in the Oceania Athletics Association's Grand Prix Series.

While a place would be a huge achievement against countrymen and overseas competitors, Hanna's presence at the meet shows he may be on the verge of bigger things.

He knows it, too.

"I've never gone this high up before," he said.

"(Selection) gives you recognition with Athletics Australia.

"Maybe I'll get into training groups that will improve my running and fitness.

"It puts your name out there and shows you want to go all the way."

Hanna was selected after he competed at the under-23 nationals last year, and represented NSW in the Australian half-marathon championships.

He expected to have to cut a minute or two from his best times (5000m: 18min 01secs, 10,000m: 37mins 28secs) to achieve a place on the Gold Coast, but he has the track record to do it.

Coach Garry Womsley said his runner had improved "out of sight".

"He works hard and has a good work ethic," he said.

"He is trying to improve all the time."

Womsley said competing for Australia would deliver a confidence boost to his runner.

"It's a good stepping stone. It's a good start for him.

"Getting picked for the opens doesn't happen often.

"So it's a great honour for Nick and a great honour for the club."

