

SPORT

Lots of effort, now for polish

RUGBY LEAGUE

BY RICK ALLEN

IT'S probably the hardest thing for a coach to work on: the game management of his key playmakers when they're under pressure in the heat of battle.

But that was the tricky dilemma for Pickers coach Luke Dorn ahead of his side's big challenge against premiers South Newcastle at Maitland on Saturday.

Dorn was delighted with the effort of his side in last

week's narrow 18-16 loss to Kurri - but was frustrated at his lack of polish in their game management.

"It's something we'll keep working on," he said. "We didn't execute the plan against Kurri and we paid the price for that."

"Our halves are better than they showed there."

"But it's difficult, especially for young players, in a game situation. I've played in the halves and know it. You're under pressure and you don't get a lot of time."

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Pickers coach Luke Dorn

It was probably the one disappointing area in what was a spirited performance.

"We've built our season on effort," Dorn admitted.

"I know that we haven't put

a full game together. There's a lot of talent in this team and we haven't scratched the surface yet.

"Having said that, over the 80 minutes Kurri were

the better side and deserved the points.

"We showed in the last 15 minutes what we can do if we can control the game and get field position. But it all came too late and that's what we have to work on."

Certainly his forwards, led by Sam Anderson, Jayden Butterfield and Brenton Horwood were strong against Kurri.

And in the backs, former Canberra and Auckland Warriors centre Matt Allwood hits like a sledgeham-

mer in defence.

His centre partner Geordie Connelly was one of Maitland's most dangerous in attack, along with Isaac Upton.

But a couple of bad reads in defence and a missed tackle was all it took for Kurri to pile on three tries.

And Souths will be every bit as dangerous.

They're young, fast and big - and they were only edged out 19-12 by pacesetters Wests last week who demolished Maitland 42-0 the previous week. It's a big ask.



CALF INJURY: Matt Thompson missed the FFA Cup clash against Charlestown and faces a number of weeks on the sideline.

Broadley, Thompson out of action

FOOTBALL

IF THE loss of key midfielder Ryan Broadley for up to six weeks with a broken hand wasn't bad enough, the Magpies will also be without experienced Matt Thompson for a number of games.

Thompson aggravated a calf injury and pulled out

before Wednesday night's 4-3 FFA Cup win over Charlestown City.

Broadley finished last weekend's NPL clash with Adamstown Rosebud in some discomfort with his hand swollen and medical staff feared it could be broken. That was confirmed

after an x-ray on Tuesday.

"He'll be missed, but I've said all along we have good depth in our squad," coach Mick Bolch said.

That will certainly be put to the test in the next few weeks.

Striker Joel Wood scored twice as Maitland overcame an early Charlestown goal in

their FFA Cup match.

While there was only one goal in it, Maitland hit the post three times.

The Magpies are back at Cooks Square on Sunday for a tough clash against Jets Youth.

"In the past Jets Youth have suffered from chop-

ping and changing the side," Bolch said. "But they seem to be more stable this season."

"It has made them more dangerous because they're getting more cohesion in their play. They've had some big wins against the top sides this season, so they're very dangerous."

Where your team is playing

RUGBY LEAGUE:

NRL: Knights v Roosters in Newcastle, Friday 7.55pm

Local: Maitland v Souths at Maitland, Saturday 3pm.

Kurri v Lakes at Kurri, Saturday 3pm.

Macquarie v Cessnock at Macquarie, Saturday, 3pm.

RUGBY UNION:

Maitland v Hamilton at Hamilton, Saturday 3pm.

Thornton Redbacks v Cooks Hill at Thornton, Sunday 3pm

FOOTBALL:

Maitland Magpies v Jets Youth, Cooks Square, Sunday, 2.30pm

Lake Macquarie v Weston Bears, Macquarie Field, Sunday, 2.30pm.

BASKETBALL:

Maitland Mustangs (men and women) v Norths Bears, Sydney, Saturday 4pm, 6pm.

AFL:

Maitland Saints v Warners Bay at Warners Bay, Saturday 2pm

NETBALL:

Saturday: Customs House v Hills Solicitors; Nexus Power Comets v Club Maitland City; George Tavern v Hinton Hotel; Tolsaf Cranes Bye.

Khawaja lucky

AUSTRALIAN batsman Usman Khawaja has avoided serious injury after being struck by fast bowler Andre Russell in Australia's seven-wicket win over the West Indies in a World Cup warm-up match at Southampton.

Opening the batting, Khawaja was hit by a bouncer and retired hurt for 5 before doctors cleared him of jaw damage.