

SPORT



POWERHOUSE: Another superb showing from US import Isaiah Ellis wasn't quite enough to get the Mustangs over the line. Picture: Jacqui Neill

Mustangs somehow pinch defeat from jaws of victory

BASKETBALL

IT WAS a golden opportunity for the high-flying Maitland Mustangs to extend their unbeaten run to eight matches.

Consider this: they're on their home court against the Sydney Comets - a team every regional side likes to beat - and, with a minute to go, they're leading by eight points.

And despite calls to play

smart, somehow the wheels fell off and they managed to lose 84-83 in a nail-biter.

It left the enthusiastic Federation Centre crowd stunned by what they had just witnessed.

With about 20 seconds to go Jack Edwards was handed an unsportsmanlike conduct foul, which the Comets calmly slotted, followed by a jump shot right on the buzz-

er to snatch the unlikeliest of wins.

For the Mustangs US import Isaiah Ellis was again strong with a double-double of 10 points and 17 rebounds to go with his four assists, while Edwards and Terrell Turner both chipped in with 17 points and five rebounds.

The news was brighter for the Mustangs women who recorded their third win of

the season with a 63-50 win over the Comets.

US import Alyssa Bennett led the way for Maitland with 21 points and nine boards, ably supported by Shakera Reilly with 19 points including three big three-pointers.

And coming off the bench, Hannah Fox was very strong with nine points and an impressive 14 rebounds.

— RICK ALLEN

Magpies suffer a shock 4-0 loss

FOOTBALL

BY RICK ALLEN

MAITLAND Magpies coach Mick Bolch didn't mince words: "It was as bad a performance as we've put in during my time here."

He was reacting to the Magpies' surprising 4-0 loss to Hamilton Olympic on Saturday.

There is no doubt this hot and cold Hamilton side was having one of their hot days, but it was difficult to see this result coming.

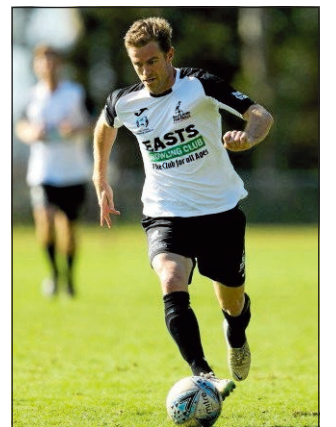
The Magpies, after losing their first game of the season, had strung together five impressive performances that included a win over Edgeworth and creditable draws against the highly fancied Broadmeadow Magic and Lambton Jaffas.

"I'm not sure four-nil is a fair indication of the game, but there's do doubt that the better side won," Bolch said.

"After half time they definitely wanted it more than we did."

Maitland suffered a body blow right on the half-time bell when they conceded a late goal to give Olympic a two-nil lead which was perhaps a touch flattering as Maitland had a number of scoring opportunities that they failed to grab.

It capped a disappointing first half during which attacking midfielder Sean Pratt suffered concussion early



INJURY: Matt Thompson.

on, and then experienced Matt Thompson suffered a strained calf and didn't return for the second half.

But after the break it was all Hamilton.

Coach Bolch shuffled his team before the match and believes this may also have hindered their cohesion.

"I've said we have about 16 players who can all do the job, so I was keen to rotate players to give them game time," he said.

"It's tricky. If I don't rotate, then the players on the bench are underdone when you need them, because they haven't had a lot of game time."

Still, Bolch said it will be business as usual this week in readiness for Sunday's home clash with Adamstown.

"We'll have a 15-minute debrief about what went wrong, but it's our first bad game for a while, so let's not overreact."

Saints do it tough again

AFL

THE Maitland Saints' tough season continued on Saturday when they were hammered by 104 points against Newcastle City at Newcastle No.1 Sports-ground on Saturday. Ironically ladder leaders City's kicking accuracy wasn't great, winning 19.21.135 to the Saints 5.1.31.

The loss means Maitland is firmly lodged on the bottom of the ladder, yet to record a win after six successive defeats.



DOING IT IN STYLE: Winger Rob Williamson celebrated his 100th first-grade game with a 60-metre try.

Blacks win in style, 50-point margin

RUGBY UNION

IT WAS the comfortable win the Maitland Blacks had been hoping for - and what's more winger Rob Williamson got to celebrate his 100th first-grade game in style with a runaway 60-metre try.

The 63-13 scoreline against struggling Southern Beaches told the story, with the Blacks largely unchallenged.

"We just concentrated on what we needed to do, reducing our silly mistakes, because we have some big games coming in the next

couple of weeks," coach Matt Lantry said.

"But we were generally good and I was pleased."

It was a strong effort across the board with halfback Ben Taylor showing he wants to keep his spot when Jono O'Toole returns, and tight head prop Harry Chapman did well against a massive opponent.

The Blacks will have a good idea how they're shaping over the next couple of weeks when they take on Nelson Bay and Hamilton.