

## SPORT



**THREAT:** After being kept scoreless last week the Magpies will be hoping striker Joel Wood can get back among the goals against Adamstown Rosebud.

## Magpie mission: Rosebud first, then FFA Cup midweek

### FOOTBALL

THE Maitland Magpies' coaching staff make no bones about - they're looking for a response after last weekend's 4-0 drubbing against Hamilton Olympic.

They get the chance to atone when they take on Adamstown Rosebud at Cook Square on Sunday, and nothing less than a win will suffice.

"Some games you just pack up your bags and move on, and that was one because nothing went right for us," football manager Mick Mirisch said.

"We had been pretty consistent before that, so it came out of nowhere."

And what of Rosebud?

"They have been hot and cold, but when they've been hot they've had some really

good wins, so we have to be wary," Mirisch said.

"They're a younger side in general, with a couple of ex-Maitland players, but their inconsistent start has meant they're down the bottom half of the table.

"So we're at home and would like to think we're a top four side, so we're looking for three points."

Maitland sit mid-table but

they still a game in hand.

### FFA CUP

The Magpies also announced that their next FFA Cup match will be played at home on Wednesday night, against Charlestown at 7.15pm. There will be a curtain raiser at 5.45pm featuring the Magpies under 13 team. Maitland beat Swansea 4-0 in the previous round.

# It's back to reality for the Blacks

### RUGBY UNION

BY RICK ALLEN

IF THE Maitland Blacks could relax just a little during last week's 63-13 romp over strugglers Southern Beaches, it's back to reality this weekend.

Maitland are at home to the highly regarded Nelson Bay, the side they edged out in last season's final to progress to the grand final.

And if the Bay wasn't already a tough proposition, they've strengthened significantly in the off-season.

"They're really powerful right across the board," Black coach Matt Thomas said.

"They've had swarm of New Zealand imports and have gone from strong, to being extremely formidable.

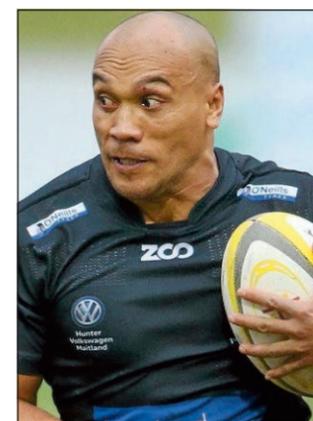
"They're a very big side in the forwards, powerful and aggressive at the breakdown, and they have speed to burn out wide. It's going to be a really big test for us."

The Blacks have made a solid start and are tracking nicely with three wins from four games, while the Bay have won two from four.

But this will give the Blacks a good guide of where they're really at.

"We've had four games now, and this is the time when you really want to start stringing some wins together," Thomas said.

"It's the time when you want to see improvement in



REUNITED: Carl Manu

the things you've been working on as a team ... maintaining pressure, reducing the silly mistakes, skills, fitness, discipline."

Lantry has no doubts it will be a tough forward game - and in that regard he believes second rowers Marcus Christensen and Gus Taylor who is stepping up from second grade, will play key roles.

He is also keen to see how the reunited centre combination of Chris Logan and Carl Manu perform.

The Blacks go in without a number of players - outside centre James Hawkins is out with a knee problem while Josh McCormack and Michael Howell are also unavailable with handle and medial injuries.

"It's a test of depth, not just for us as a team but as a club," Lantry said. "We need players to step up, and that's what a good club is all about."

## Big test for Pickers

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"It's their first season at it, and it's a big job.

"Last season we had hooker Adam Clydesdale helping take some pressure off in that regard, but he's not there now, so it's a big ask for young players. "They're growing into it though."

The other Coalfields team, Cessnock will play away against Central on Saturday. It promises to be a tight affair with both sides having a 1-2 record.



**CHALLENGE:** The Port to Port trails around Newcastle and the Hunter are as challenging as they are scenic.

## Country's finest riders hit the trails

### MOUNTAIN BIKES

FOR mountain bikers, it has taken just five years for the Port to Port (May 23-26) event to earn a reputation as one of Australia's premier stage races.

Riders from all over the nation come to Newcastle and the Hunter to test themselves over four stages of demanding trails through state forests, wine country, hinterland and national parks.

And leading the charge this year will be Australia's king of mountain biking

Brendan Johnston.

The Canberra based Johnston, produced a clean sweep of the Epic Series Oceania events last year and he is hoping the experience of racing the world's toughest mountain bike event will be the edge he and GIANT Shimano team mate Jon Odams, need.

Riding solo last year, Armidale's Holly Harris was untouchable - and she's back again, but this year will race mixed pairs with her brother Michael.