

Moore-less Brisbane shows FNQ boys are still off pace

Bulls turned into road kill

ANY notions about where the FNQ Bulls thought they were in the Queensland State League pecking order have to be reassessed after a forgettable road trip to Brisbane.

The Bulls were thrashed 4-0 by the Brisbane Strikers at Perry Park on Saturday night, ending the club's impressive four-game winning streak.

The Strikers were expected to have Craig Moore playing for them

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but the Socceroos defender was unable to obtain clearance in time to take the park.

But even without Moore in their backline, the Strikers had too much class for a disappointing Bulls and led 3-0 at halftime.

While the loss was not as severe as the 8-2 thrashing the Strikers

inflicted in the pre-season, Bulls coach Peter Tokesi said his side was still off the pace.

"I actually thought we were the better team in the first half and could've led 3-1," he said.

"But we came out a bit flat in the second half and we spent most of our time defending.

"The Strikers, being 3-0 in front, were able to come out and play football and knocked the ball around well.

"We were disappointed in ourselves with how we played and, in a way, it's good that we felt that way after a loss like that."

While they have only lost two games in six rounds this season, the Bulls are conceding more than two goals a match on average.

Tokesi will address the worrying statistic at training this week.

"I actually think my defence of Kane (Alderton), Victor (Madrid)

and Alex (Plowman) are playing quite well but we're still conceding some silly goals," he said.

"I'm an attack-minded sort of coach but we might have to play with a different pattern to stop it from happening."

The Bulls' only injury concern out of the Strikers match is Callum Wood, who left the field with a hamstring injury in the opening stanza.

Lion-hearted Murphy show

A STAR turn from young striker Matthew Murphy lifted Leichhardt to the top of the FNQ Football men's premier division soccer championship after its 4-2 home win against Stratford on Saturday night.

Leichhardt coach Chris Pennington's decision to throw Murphy into the fray in the final 15 minutes of the match paid off handsomely, the youngster repaying his coach's faith with two late goals to seal the victory.

The teams were locked at 1-1 at halftime after Leichhardt had enjoyed an ideal start when Darcy Fernandez scored in the third minute and were level at 2-2 when Murphy exploded into the match.

The two sides went into the clash sharing top spot after opening the season with three successive victories apiece and Pennington was delighted the Lions now have the sole premiership lead.

"The boys played good football, it was a tough game," he said. "We're getting stronger every week, the boys are digging in and they're sticking to the plan set for them."

Pennington said his side's ability to retain possession of the ball for extended periods of the game contributed to the victory.

He said goalkeeper Jack

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Richards was outstanding on the night, producing several fine saves, with defender Mark Pinto also strong at the back.

Stratford coach Glenn Binskin was proud his players had pushed Leichhardt late into the match, despite having their third game in seven days.

"We knew Leichhardt were going to come out hard against us, and we did the same thing," he said.

"We had our chances, and we hit the post twice or three times, (but) after three games in a week, the boys were feeling it a bit in the last 15 minutes."

Binskin said the tough schedule meant he would not read too much into the result and was confident his team would bounce back next round.

He said midfielder Andre Lohman and attacking weapon Aaron Bull were among his best on the night.

In the other premier division match on Saturday night, Edge Hill secured its first win of the season with a 3-1 triumph over Mareeba.

It was just Edge Hill's second match for 2010. It will line up for its third against Fusion at Tiger Park on Wednesday night.

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Focused: Stratford striker Neil Mapp heads the ball against the Lions on Saturday night.

Picture: SEAN DAVEY



Tight battle: Edge Hill's John Sillah (left) attacks on Saturday.

Ball bounce for Edge Hill

A KIERON Ball goal in the opening seconds of the match helped propel Mareeba to a 3-0 FNQ Football youth division soccer premiership victory over Edge Hill at Tiger Park on Saturday.

Ball's strike, which came after Mareeba's Brandon Pozzebon stole the ball off Edge Hill immediately after the kick-off, and second-half goals to Robert Hodgson and Jamahl Hassem gave the Bulls their first win of the season.

Club president Alex Srhoj said the win had resulted from a strong team performance.

"As the game went on we grew more comfortable," he said. "All the work (coach) Jose (Lopez) has done with the team is starting to pay off."

Srhoj said Pierre Portella and Pozzebon were dominant in the midfield for the Bulls.

Edge Hill coach Giuseppe Minoia lamented the Tigers' missed chances.

Minoia praised 15-year-old Hisiu Russell's effort in holding down the central midfield role against older opponents and also gave plaudits to makeshift goalkeeper Jason Foxcroft.

We're getting stronger every week, the boys are digging in

— Leichhardt coach Chris Pennington



High hopes: Spurs manager Harry Redknapp.

High stakes for Spurs, City in Champions race

SPURS will stop at nothing to beat Manchester City in their clash for fourth place, manager Harry Redknapp says, while his opposite number, Roberto Mancini, refused to say his job depended on a win.

Mancini's City kicked Aston Villa out of the race to finish fourth in the English Premier League with a 3-1 win yesterday and Redknapp's Tottenham beat Bolton 1-0 to set up a battle royale for the final Champions League spot.

Spurs go into Wednesday's crucial

clash between the pair at Eastlands with a one-point advantage, although Liverpool could still spoil the party and bag fourth.

"We're right there. We have two big games to come," Redknapp said.

"It's a massive game and we would have taken this at the start of the season.

"City are tough opposition. City's front two are a threat to anyone but we have good strikers, too.

"I wouldn't want to go there and be negative."

Mancini refused to be drawn on how the result against Spurs will affect his position.

"Everyone asks me this but I don't know," the Italian said. "It's not important for me, it's important that the squad win the next game and get fourth position. I do this job because I enjoy being a manager and enjoy football. I like this job."

At Eastlands, Norway striker John Carew put Villa ahead in the 16th minute, beating City keeper Marton Fulop.

But Argentine striker Carlos Tevez converted a 41st-minute penalty and Emmanuel Adebayor put the Blues ahead two minutes later. Wales forward Craig Bellamy sealed the victory in the 89th minute.

At White Hart Lane, Spurs stretched their impressive home run to eight straight wins thanks to midfielder Tom Huddlestone's stunning 20m strike in the 38th minute.

Spurs' win meant they held on to fourth on 67 points with City one point behind them.