



// SOCCER

Edge Hill wrap up a season's treble

EDGE Hill United enhanced their ability to come from behind in crucial games, recovering from a half-time deficit to reel in Townsville side MA Olympic 3-1 in the Crad Evans Shield on Saturday night.

In shades of the FNQ Premier League grand final win over Marlin Coast a fortnight ago, Edge Hill's fitness came to the fore as they completed the premierships-grand final-Crad Evans treble at Tiger Park.

But they had to overcome a slick MA Olympic outfit who silenced the home crowd early by earning a 1-0 margin at the



BRAD THOMPSON

thompsonb@tcp.newsltd.com.au

break. Despite trailing – and being outplayed in all areas – Edge Hill coach Rob Wales conceded the discussions were composed in the change-rooms as they plotted a second-half comeback.

“It was very calm, we had been in that spot before and we knew that our fitness was going to get us home.”

That calmness proved successful as Edge Hill loomed to equalise as play re-started, but were denied their opening goal through near misses and quality saves from the MA Olympic keeper.

Eventually, Edge Hill capitalised on their domination when leading striker Max Latimer, who missed out on the grand final win due to a wedding, broke the drought for his side, and then shortly after put them in front 2-1. Speedster Michael Ortiz was injected into the game up front, heaping pressure on the visitors. Ortiz's crafty work fed Col

Hobgood, who nailed the sealer for Edge Hill's 3-1 victory with 10 minutes to go.

“It's great for Cairns and great for Edge Hill,” declared a jubilant Wales. “It started with the Mazda Cup (win) and continued on from there; that was when the boys realised they had something special.”

MA Olympic coach Glen Davey praised his side's valiant efforts, but admitted his boys were exhausted in the closing stages.

“We ran out of gas in the last 25 minutes and Edge Hill's a good team, it's no disgrace losing to them,” he said.

Leichhardt masters of shoot-out

EXTRA time and a penalty shoot-out proved no problem for Leichhardt as they conquered another heart-stopping finale to take out the ladies Crad Evans Shield over Townsville side Burdekin on Saturday night.

With fitness on their side, and Leanne Sarota protecting the goals, Leichhardt coach Kenneth Bosence admitted he remained composed as the side endured the same scenario as their FNQ Premier League win over Edge Hill United a fortnight ago.

“Realistically, I was quite confident going into penalties,” he said. Evenly poised at half-time (1-1), Leichhardt returned to control possession and take the lead (2-1) until a shin injury to Emma Fletcher in the 80th minute set them back, allowing Burdekin to conjure the leveller 10 minutes before the full-time whistle.

Edge Hill United's men's reserve grade set the winning tone by scoring a 2-1 win over Rebels in their Crad Evans Shield clash. But it might not have been the case had Rebels not thrown away the easiest of chances to level in the dying stages.

Edge Hill player-coach John Dillon described it as “the Edge Hill bounce” as the ball bobbed on the Rebels player as he walked into an unmanned goal and sprayed the opportunity. Evergreen Graham Grant led the way for Edge Hill.



Shield action: Leichhardt's Sarah Eigl controls the ball in front of her Burdekin opponent.

Socceroos won't be surprised

A RECENT history of titanic battles is ensuring the Socceroos won't be taken by surprise when they look to build their 2014 World Cup qualification momentum against Oman tomorrow night.

Having won their first two matches against Thailand and Saudi Arabia, Australia can take a giant leap towards progressing to the next round of qualifying with another victory at Sydney's ANZ Stadium.

The Socceroos are high on confidence after

Friday night's 5-0 friendly thrashing of Malaysia in Canberra, which included a second-half appearance by Gordonvale's Adam Sarota. Australia are heavily favoured to also get the job done against the Omanis, who are ranked 105 and have made a slow start to qualifying. But they are treating the gulf nation with the utmost respect, knowing their three previous clashes have all gone down to the wire.

The teams met twice in World Cup qualify-

ing in 2009, with Australia leaving it late to secure victories in both matches.

Their only other clash came during Australia's ill-fated 2007 Asian Cup campaign, with a last-minute Tim Cahill equaliser salvaging a 1-1 draw in Bangkok.

“We've played them a few times now ... and we're well aware of what they're capable of,” veteran Luke Wilkshire said. “They're unpredictable, they've got quality in the team and we know they can cause problems.”

A-LEAGUE ROUND 1



Roar quickly slot into their winning ways

MELBOURNE Victory and Sydney FC insist star recruits Harry Kewell and Brett Emerton will build significantly on their A-League debuts and they'll likely have to if either side is to stop the Brisbane Roar juggernaut from rolling on.

As Victory and Sydney opened the new season with a scoreless, but entertaining, draw in front of more than 40,000 fans at Etihad Stadium on Saturday night, the Roar were back doing what they do best – winning games and playing beautiful football in the process.

The Roar exhibited patience and class in a 1-0 win over Central Coast at Suncorp Stadium to suggest the off-season loss of key players, including captain Matt McKay, won't necessarily stop them from remaining the competition's benchmark.

Mitch Nichols' winner took the Roar's record unbeaten streak to 29 matches and left coach Ange Postecoglou optimistic about maintaining his team's high standard.

Most pleasing to Postecoglou was the performance of his recruits – the likes of Issey Nakajima-Farran, Besart Berisha, Matthew Jurman and Kofi Danning, suggesting they will fit well into the champions' set-up.

“The new players did their job, they added to what we've established here and, hopefully, from our point of view, when they get a little more settled, there will be more improvement in them and us as a whole,” Postecoglou said.

The performance left Mariners coach Graham Arnold in no doubt as to who would be the side to beat in 2011/12.

“Whoever is more consistent than Brisbane is going to win the competition,” Arnold said.

While the Victory and Sydney drew blanks in their highly anticipated opener, there were plenty of talking points from an at-times heated clash that the Sky Blues finished with 10 men after Mark Bridge was sent off for striking. Billed as the battle of Kewell and Emerton, it was the former who certainly came out on top, the latter looking well off his best and having a first-half penalty saved by Victory keeper Ante Covic. Emerton admitted he was disappointed with his performance, but insisted he would improve with time.

“I think the longer the weeks go on, I think I'll get fitter and stronger and feel more comfortable out there,” he said.

Kewell's determined performance signalled exciting potential for the Victory.

Newcastle showed little effects of the shock sacking last week of coach Branko Culina, with recruit Sung-Hwan Byun's late goal earning a 3-2 win over Melbourne Heart under caretaker coach Craig Deans.

Gold Coast and Wellington shared the points 1-1 at Skilled Park yesterday, while Perth Glory made a winning start, with recruit Billy Mehmet's second-half header proving the difference in a 1-0 victory over Adelaide at nib Stadium.

NEWCASTLE JETS 3 (Ryan Griffiths 31m, 45+1m, Byun Sung-Hwan 90+3m) d **MELBOURNE HEART 2** (Mate Dugandzic 24m, 51m) at Ausgrid Stadium. Crowd: 12,467. Referee: Ryan Shephard.

MELBOURNE VICTORY 0 drew **SYDNEY FC 0** at Etihad Stadium. Crowd: 40,351. Referee: Peter Green.

BRISBANE ROAR 1 (Mitch Nichols 72m) d **CENTRAL COAST MARINERS 0** at Suncorp Stadium. Crowd: 13,467. Referee: Chris Beath.

GOLD COAST UNITED 1 (James Brown 88m) drew **WELLINGTON PHOENIX 1** (Chris Greenacre 17m) at Skilled Park. Crowd: 4,113. Referee: Gerard Parsons.

PERTH GLORY 1 (Billy Mehmet 77m) d **ADELAIDE UNITED 0** at nib Stadium. Crowd: 9,452. Referee: Jarred Gillett.

LADDER

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Newcastle	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Perth	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Brisbane	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Wellington	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Gold Coast	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Sydney	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Victory	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Heart	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Adelaide	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
CC Mariners	1	0	0	1	0	1	0