

Quick goals save Bulls

SEVEN minutes of domination probably saved the FNQ Bulls season.

With five minutes of regular time left in their clash with the Whitsunday Miners, the Bulls were faced with the very real threat of slumping to seventh spot, and losing touch with the top six in the Queensland State League.

In the first half the visitors frustrated the Bulls at Borzi Park, but after some cajoling from coach Peter Tokesi at the break, Bulls dangerman David Ruiz scored in the 46th minute to give his team



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a 1-0 lead. In the 60th minute, the Bulls chances of victory took a bad turn when Jamie White and Clark Bradford gave the Miners a 2-1 advantage.

The Miners were on the brink of making it 3-1, with a little more than 10 minutes left on the clock.

A tardy Bulls challenge inside the penalty box looked set to give the Miners the chance to claim victory.

But the referee handed a reprieve, or perhaps a square up, after the linesman had minutes earlier ignored a Miner who was off-side to allow Bradford's goal.

Instead of a penalty, play went on, and it was all the home side needed. The Bulls then went bang, bang, bang.

In the space of an extraordinary seven-minute period, the Bulls had wrenched back the contest, even-

tually scoring an improbable 4-2 victory.

Ruiz equalized in the 85th minute, Josh DeNittis gave his side a 3-2 lead in the 87th, and Bronson Koppen sealed it in the 92nd.

The Miners momentarily lapsed slightly in concentration, but Tokesi said the treble of goals were by design.

"The last couple came straight off the training park," he said.

"It was a poor second half but we scored three goals, and we scored the goals because we worked hard until the end."

Tokesi admits his side has played much worse throughout the season, but the job was made tough by the Miners tactic to flood their attack.

The Miners are a hard working side, and are very quick they caused us a bit of grief with their speed," he said.

"They had eight players back behind the ball during the match.

"But at the end of the day, we got the three points. We've played much better and lost this year."

Alex Plowman marshalled the Bulls defence, while Ruiz was industrious all night in attack.

Barca prove they're best in Europe

IN one sublime Champions League final, football got two emphatic answers.

One: this Barcelona squad, absolutely without question now, is among that small fistful of teams that can legitimately be considered among the best club sides ever.

Two: Lionel Messi is as good as Pele and Diego Maradona ever were.

No ifs, or buts, or maybes. Just facts. Proven on the green pitch of Wembley and by the shattered hearts of Manchester United.

The final scoreline yesterday said 3-1.

But that was kind. It could have been worse, far worse, for Alex Ferguson's players.

They weren't just beaten, they were humbled. Not merely outplayed and out-thought, but utterly outclassed, too.

"In my time as manager, it's the best team I've faced," said Ferguson, who is a quarter-century, and counting, at the United helm. Not that there's any shame in being overshadowed by perfection.

United's white-shirted worker-ants, as one expects of any team fielded by Ferguson, a master motivator, did not surrender, did not stop running, did not let their heads droop.

They dignified themselves by not losing their tempers, which would have been so easy because Barcelona rarely shares the ball.

Barca's winning recipe includes a big dollop of selfishness.

Once it had snuffed out United's spirited start to the match, Barca's triumph quickly started to take on an air of inevitability.

Even Wayne Rooney's cleverly worked and sweetly struck goal on 34 minutes could only delay, not change, United's fate.

Ferguson once coined the term "carousel" to describe Barca's dizzying passing game. At Wembley, it spun ever quicker as the match wore on.

Between them, Barca's super-trio of Messi and midfield partners Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez completed 305 passes - four more than the entire United team.

So if Barca can do this to mighty United twice in three years, then what hope is there next season for them and other teams?

Not much. Not, that is, if Pep Guardiola sticks around. The Barca manager is presiding over what looks like the makings of a dynasty. In three years, Guardiola has 10 titles.



Good as Pele: Barcelona's Lionel Messi celebrates with the Champions League trophy after defeating Manchester United at Wembley Stadium in London yesterday.

Fusion step up tempo

THE FNQ Fusion responded in just the fashion coach Martin Docherty was hoping for, scoring a 4-1 win over the Whitsunday Miners in their Northern Youth League clash on Saturday night.

The Fusion opened the first leg of the competition with a 1-0 loss to the classy Townsville Razorbacks, and had their backs to the walls after a disappointing 5-1 loss to Leichhardt in the FNQ Premier League last weekend.

Docherty said it was just the reaction he was looking for.

"I asked them to respond from the disaster of last week and they did," he said.

The Fusion gained the upper hand early on, playing the clash on their terms.

"The main focus was to control the tempo," Docherty said.

"We set up a more attacking emphasis on the game and that worked for us."

The Fusion took a 3-0 lead at half time after Docherty gave his defenders the licence to attack.

"We took our chances when they came along," he said.

"Tyler Schofield at left back was our best player and Toshio Surha was fantastic.

"Matty Groenewoud too was very good, I gave our right and left backs a real freedom to attack."

Winning Leichhardt need to lift: Crowe

LEICHHARDT made it two wins on the trot with Adrian Crowe at the helm, disposing of Southside (6-1) last night.

Although it wasn't always convincing in their FNQ Premier League clash, three early goals proved enough to see off the home side at Fretwell Park.

Leading 3-1 at the half-time break, Crowe was upbeat about the early stages of the game, but not so

the concluding stages, admitting his side will have to lift another gear before their next clash.

"I'm happy we got the points, but I was a bit disappointed in how we played," he said.

"We started well with a few early goals and then it fell away in that second half and we found ourselves in the bit of a rut."

Leichhardt face Stratford this weekend, and Crowe knows his

side has plenty of areas to work on at training.

"If we pull on that kind of performance against Stratford we're going to get done," he said.

"There's lots to work on this week."

Leichhardt goalkeeper Steven Dangard repelled a number of on-shot targets from Southside in the second half.

"He kept us in the game on a

number of occasions," Crowe said.

"We were very happy to have him back from the (FNQ) Bulls."

Leichhardt found the back of the net twice in the final stages of the match, but had chances to completely pour on the scoreboard pressure.

Southside's defence was consistently left with holes for the Leichhardt attack to drive through.

Connel Plunkett and Paul Eigl,

along with Rhys Agius continually found space in the box, but were unable to convert from their chances.

On Saturday night, Gabby Mason's strike salvaged a 1-0 win for the Marlin Coast Rangers over Innisfail at Pennell Field.

Edge Hill United sprung back into the winners' circle with a 2-0 win over Mareeba at Borzi Park.