

Bloods have to tame Fishhook

● From Back Page
Hodges expects Ltyentye Apurte to be keen for revenge.

It is a combination he hopes produces a tougher test for his CAFL premiers.

He said: "There are two reasons I want this game to be close. Firstly it would be good for the competition as a whole if we put on a show."

"The second reason is that I'd like to see how we cope with pressure."

"Honestly the closest any one has got to us this season is six or eight goals and that was against Pioneer who we beat by 14 goals last week."

And Conway has promised West a battling this weekend.

After holding the CAFL leaders for three quarters in the last clash, Conway is confident the team has West's scent and are capable of producing the upset of the season.

He said: "Last time we fell away in the last quarter."

"West are a hard-running team and we tried to keep up with them."

"Players got frustrated and that is why we lost. But we have learnt our lesson."

Like Conway with Davis, Hodges has also been forced to turn to youth for the decider.

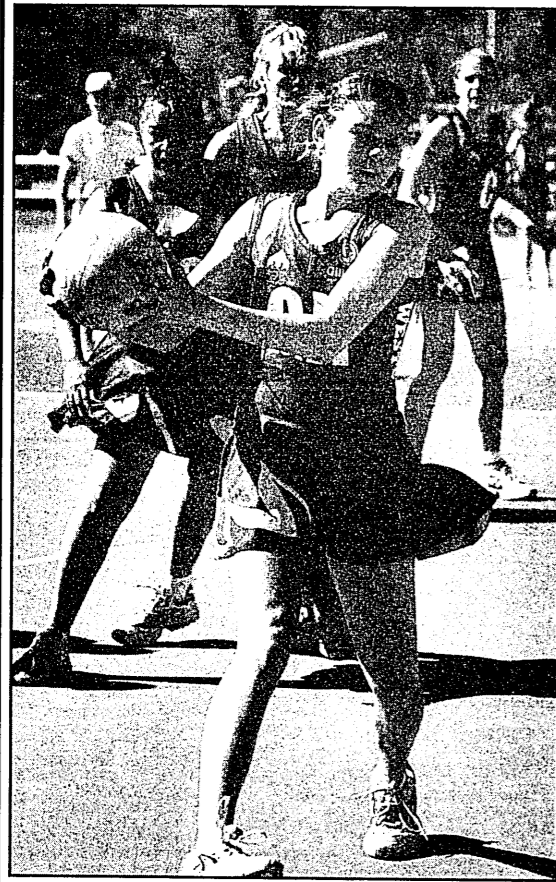
Mid-field hard man Mick Hauser and youngsters Lachlan Boal and Dillon Measures are all out.

Roland Ah Chee has been recalled alongside fellow under-17 regulars Matt Fossier, Matt Cunningham, Nathan Bald and Sam Jennings.

It may be a makeshift side but Hodges is confident the team will go about its business as usual and make history as the first Champions League winners.

Conway is equally keen to make history tomorrow and break Ltyentye Apurte's 15-year drought in the process.

Southam's hopes high for T10 titles



Sandy Warner will share the shooting duties in Darwin.

NETBALL

By STEVE MENZIES

A NEW coach with seven untested players has high hopes of winning the T10 Netball Challenge in Darwin this weekend.

The Alice Springs Open Squad has won four of the last five titles and only missed out last year when they were unable to field a team.

Seven out of this year's 12 players will be making their senior debut — as will coach Leanne Southam.

The team's training has been disrupted and players are missing through injury and unavailability.

But whether their presence would make much difference is debatable.

Southam has the task of getting the best out of the players she puts on court — especially for the final against Darwin at 7pm on Sunday.

There will be four lead-up games — Grootie Eylandt at 8pm today, Alice Springs 21s at 2pm tomorrow, Darwin at 7pm tomorrow and Darwin 21s at 9am on Sunday.

Southam said: "All the players are keen and will lift for the games."

"The preparation has been disrupted but we had good match play on Sunday and

ASNA TEAMS - 2006

OPEN	19/21	Under 17	Under 15	Under 13
Helen Brown	Kim Bennett	Candice Eckerman	Jessica AhChee	Sherkeim Abala
Thea Dunkley	Jess Bunting	Sam Komadina	Cindy Drover	Tisharlia Abala
Tara Everett	Jess Cunningham	Jessica Kruske	Anna Grosse	Jordan Hickey
Ronelle Hall	Natalie Herrick	Talitha Kruske	Mary Hamde	Zoe Lang
Heidi Kurovec	Jess Lowe	Alison Lowe	Danielle Irons	Bree AhChee
Lauren Mengal	Carlie Martin	Alinah Chalker	Abby Lauritsen	Caley Pannell
Rebecca Monfries	Courtney McLeod	Alison Miller	Ashleigh Adams	Carly Ryan
Taryn Nottle	Elizabeth Moyses	Corina Maloney		Tasmin Saint
Tegan Pabst	Tegan Pannell	Jenny Montgomery	Tahlia O'Casey	Molly St John
Katie Pickett	Anna Ritchie	Jessica Sanderson	Sharna Ryan	Olivia Tohi
Kelby Rodda	Rechele Smith	Kate Sexton	Jessica Smith	Danielle Wenske
Sandy Warner		Rachel Tohi	Lauren Wilson	Emma Wilnot
Coach				
Leanne Southam	David Yeaman	Gary Bently	Deborah Gray	Sue Pannell
Manager				
Andrea Doyle	Heather Cornford	Judy Kruske	Kirsty Ray	Rosemary Weckert

Wednesday leading up to the Titles.

"I have not been able to settle on combinations to make sure we have the best seven on court for the final."

"Everyone has to step up so they will all have to have a run."

The final-week loss of Aimee Rodda through injury has meant a rethinking of the attack with Katie Pickett coming into the side.

Rodda provided more variety with Pickett being more of a one-position player.

She will share the shooting with Heidi Kurovec, Tegan Pabst and Sandy Warner.

The centre court players —

Thea Dunkley, Ronelle Hall, Lauren Mengal, Taryn Nottle and Kelsey Rodda — provide plenty of flexibility for attacking or defensive plays.

Veteran Helen Brown will head the defensive end with support from Tara Everett and Rebecca Monfries.

There are plenty of reasons why the team should strive for a good showing. All 12 of the players selected to represent the NT in the 2005 national titles were from the Top End.

It will be a struggle for Alice Springs to win the 19s and 21s titles against strong Darwin combinations.

But Alice Springs will be favourites to win the under-15 and under-13 titles.

Over-stretched refs running out of puff - Crisis of whistle blowers

UMPIRING

By ANDREW ALOIA

ALICE Springs sporting bodies are scrambling to deal with a critical shortage of umpires and referees.



Mark Noonan says focus on developing young talent.

Major sports such as basketball, soccer, Australian rules football, rugby league and netball all report they are understaffed.

And those officials that have picked up the whistle say they are overworked.

Sport insiders say verbal abuse and taunts on and off the field have long discouraged sporting fans from volunteering for umpire duty.

That lack of new blood has left Alice Springs sports clinging to a small but valued legion of diehard whistle blowers.

Alice Springs basketball president Elaine Rock — herself a referee — is optimistic about the state of the game as a new crop of junior players get involved.

Recently about 10 youngsters sat the basic test to qualify them as level 0 referees.

Happy to see renewed interest, Rock is still sceptical about the future of umpiring while the association still relies on a small pool of devotees.

He said: "We will never ever say we have enough."

"It is fantastic that kids are enthusiastic about it, but we are not about to get cocky about our numbers."

"The young ones are all for it now but then there is that age when they just drop out, focus on other things."

To maintain interest, basketball has set out to reward their youngsters, not only with

money, but by giving them pathways to officiate at a higher level.

Kyle Godwin has been identified as the first junior to train for next year's junior national championships.

Interest is also expected to spike when Bill Mildenhall — Australia's most decorated National Basketball League referee with more than 800 games in the middle — visits the Centre.

Boost

Central Australian Rugby League got a much-needed boost when the Penrith Panthers and Newcastle Knights played a trial match at Anzac Oval.

While the National Rugby League opted to fly in Jason Robinson to dictate play on the field, CARL referees Steve Smith and Tim Pearson were enlisted to help out as touch judges.

CARL referee's coordinator Jim O'Grady said the opportunity was a much needed reward for dedicated whistle blowers.

He said: "We have three level-two referees in town. We are always looking for more involvement from players and parents in juniors."

NT umpires boss Mark Noonan, who was in town for the recent under-13 football exchange, said there will be a renewed focus on developing umpires from an early age.

He said: "At these junior carnivals we will run Territory umpiring academies to develop 13 to 18-year-old umpires."

"I'd say that we would need at least another 12 umpires here in Alice

"For senior competition we have learned to deal with the lack of numbers by backing up game after game."

Netball faces a unique problem in their premier competition.

While 24 whistle blowers qualified to officiate only last month, there has been no influx of umpires going on to earn their badge.

Their most prized whistle blower, Kylie Bell, has forged a sterling reputation for herself and took charge of her second Commonwealth Bank Trophy (national league) game in Darwin last month.

Alice Springs netball president David Yeaman admits the league has developed a reliance on a small number of people.

He said: "We are struggling a bit."

"The number of qualified umpires is great and that helps with junior and senior games but not our A-grade."

"We need more of those people that are qualified to go on with it."

AFL Central Australia has recovered from a seemingly ruinous situation last season when umpires threatened to boycott the league.

This season more juniors have become involved in regular senior competition.

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THAR SHE BLOWS: Soccer referees Bobby Hood, Neil Smark and former referee boss David Hood. Picture: CHLOE ERLICH

Springs to give others a rest so they don't have to double up every weekend, umpiring matches on Friday, Saturday and Sunday."

Territory Football Federation Southern Zone chairman Neil Smark concedes referee stocks in the Alice are in need of a drastic boost.

Richard Lorenc, the head of referee development in Australia, and FFNT general manager Richard Beasley ran a training course with 13 league officials earlier this month.

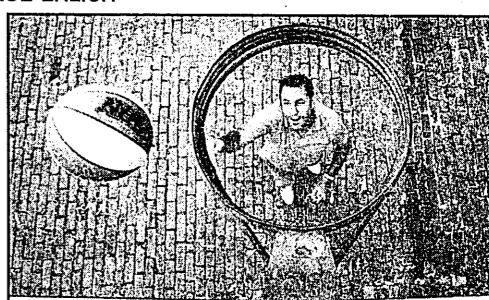
The lack of numbers has forced the league to employ the two-referee

system to officiate games in the absence of lines men — a solution that Smark said is a short-term solution to a much bigger problem.

He said: "Referee numbers have not been able to keep up with the games growth."

"Competition numbers have more than doubled in the last two years while referee numbers have slowly grown."

"We need at least 20 to 30 more refs but I'm confident we will get those numbers up over the next 12 months with referee courses coming up next month."



800 GAMES: Bill Mildenhall makes a hoop.

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Gordon Clarke Level 3 Hockey Coach who worked with the Australian Mens Hockey Team as a high performance video analyst.

Jan Stirling Head Coach of the Australian Womens Basketball Team (The Opals).

Registrations are essential

To book your place, please contact:
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Vikings desperate for players

RUGBY LEAGUE

By ANDREW ALOIA

CENTRAL Australian Rugby League officials are pleading for former players to dust off their boots and support the game.

Vikings have struggled to field a team this season and are in danger of sinking.

They have been unable to field a team for the past three rounds.

And club president David Chalker is calling for all registered players to make an effort to turn up for tomorrow's clash against Central Memorial.

He said: "We are still a club and want to play. It is up to the people who put their hands up at the start of the season to get down to Anzac Oval and play football for us."

CARL president Brad Tessmann has gone even further, sending an open invitation to all interested players to get to Anzac Oval in search of a game.

He said: "There are only eight weeks of regular competition to go."

"If there is anyone who wants to play there is a team here that needs them."

The CARL held crisis talks with the club on Monday night and de-

ecided to help by moving all of their games to 2pm Saturday.

Chalker hopes the move will help with player's work schedules.

He said: "It allows us to set a regular timetable."

"Players now know they have to be there at 1pm and we can sort ourselves out early."

Vikings have been led by a devoted pack of seven players that have continued to front every Saturday.

The club has relied on ring-ins to field sides each weekend.

Chalker said: "We have 24 registered players but most of them are just

one offs. They help us out one weekend but we don't expect to see them again."

Even players from Yulara, who travel more than 900km every week to play for the team, are not enough to spark pride in the Sky Blue.

Chalker has been frustrated by the lack of players, blasting them for letting down their teammates.

He said: "It is not up to those blokes from Yulara to drive the club forward. It is the blokes who early in the season put their hand up to do their bit who have to come back."

In other rugby league action the unbeaten West Dragons will take on United at 3pm.

Ross retires: 20 years bringing integrity to racing

STEWARDS chairman Ross Lennox will oversee his final race meet at Pioneer Park this weekend.

After more than 20 years upholding the integrity of racing, Lennox is keen to settle down to life away from the track.

While not always directly involved in the industry, racing has always been part of his life.

He started his career as

an apprentice jockey and dabbled in training before making a bold move to officiating.

Lennox relocated to Pioneer Park five years ago after more than 16 years based in Mt Isa looking after racing in North West Queensland.

"The change was the break he was looking for after years travelling across country Queensland."

He said: "It was wonderful to have such a challenge so late in my working life."

Sunday marks Lennox's full time retirement from the position; he will stay on for another six weeks to help the new boss settle in.



Ross Lennox

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