



● **Bandits Rachel Maenpaa lines up on the basket.** Pictures: JOHN RUSSELL

Ladies fail to capitalise on strong start

BY STEVE SMITH

SAME story, different day.

The Albury-Wodonga Lady Bandits slumped to a 10th straight defeat in an all-too-familiar manner on Saturday night.

Effort was never a problem but a distinct lack of scoring punch combined with a rebound count slanted heavily against the Border club resulted in an 86-58 loss to the Sandringham Lady Sabres at Lauren Jackson Sports Centre.

Sandringham lived up to Lady Bandits coach James Ballinger's pre-match assessment as an elite SEABL outfit, withstanding a surprising first-quarter assault before racing away with the contest.

Lady Sabres guard Micaela

Cocks proved to be unstoppable with 29 points and 10 rebounds, with Hope Terdich the ideal inside foil, adding 22 points and nine boards.

Albury-Wodonga's import duo of Lonnik Thompson and Rachel Maenpaa led with 14 and 13 points respectively but the Lady Bandits again struggled for scoring depth.

Ballinger, while pleased with his team's overall effort, admitted his charges needed to learn to maintain a high standard of play, even while fatigued.

"The first quarter, I loved how much width and energy we played with, everyone was moving and we were in a flow," Ballinger said.

"The rest of the game, we were condensed but Sandringham is a quality team.

"We did it for a quarter and we need to evolve to do that for longer."

An entertaining first quarter saw the hosts go blow-for-blow with their opponents, leading by as many as eight before Sandringham closed with a flurry to force a 24-24 tie by the close.

But a dominant second stanza from the Lady Sabres put paid to any notions the Border club had of causing a boilover, with the visitors sprinting away to a 50-34 lead at the main break.

Sandringham extended its advantage to 69-42 with 10 minutes to play.

It was all academic from there, with the Lady Bandits — although continuing to work hard — incapable of reducing the margin by any appreciable amount.



● **Emma Mahady moves away from Sam Woosnam.**