

New faces help lift Bandits from cellar

BY STEVE SMITH

IT wasn't pretty or easy but the Albury-Wodonga Bandits dragged themselves from the cellar of the SEABL's South Conference after splitting its tough road trip at the weekend.

Setting aside a week of import turmoil, the Border club ground out an 81-75 win over the always-talented Nunawading Spectres on Saturday night.

With fellow conference grand finalists Knox Raiders reeling in last place after seven straight defeats, the Bandits (4-9) moved to within two games of fourth-placed Ballarat (6-7).

New imports Jermel Jenkins and Flenard Whitfield were both key contributors, with Jenkins compiling a neat start line of 16 points, nine rebounds and four assists, despite missing 13 of his 18 shots and committing four turnovers.

Whitfield added 11 points and nine boards before fouling out, skipper Nick Payne top-scored with 18 points and both Matt de Koeeyer and Jack Duck nailed big shots down the stretch to seal the win.

Coach Brad Chalmers admitted it was pleasing to see his team's defensive chemistry and its ability to bounce back from its off-court distractions.

"We played the right way and defensively we were really good," Chalmers said.

"We didn't shoot well but we did all the 1 per cent things well, we clicked a bit and that was nice to see.

"All the team defensive rules, we were able to stick to them and the five guys on the floor played as a good defensive unit and that always makes it easier to win."

Yesterday, a poor sec-



ond quarter cost the

champions dearly against a rampant Geelong Supercats, who cruised to a 104-86 win at The Arena.

The Bandits trailed by just six points at the second term but a 32-13 deficit was 25 at the long break and the contest effectively over.

In just his second outing for the club, Jenkins showed his potential with 37 points (12/23 field goals, 5/12 on three-pointers), seven assists and six rebounds.

A deeply disappointed Chalmers said the defeat to the high-powered Supercats was simply down to a lack of mental toughness from his players.

"Very disappointed, we've been talking about it for a while, the things we need to do consistently and in the second quarter, when the game was up for grabs, they lifted and we wilted," he said.

"The Australian talent needs to stand up, we've made some changes and now the other guys need to lift, they're accountable just like everyone else.

"It's been a tough week, we were happy to be able to compete and get a win but some old habits surfaced today.

"We feel confident we've got a good mix now and I think we'll get back to the way we want to play, if we can do that, we'll be right back in the mix."



● New Albury-Wodonga Bandits import Flenard Whitfield goes for the shot against Geelong yesterday. Pictures: PAUL HANCOCK/WP PHOTOGRAPHY GEELONG

Lady Bandits beaten by slow starts

BY STEVE SMITH

ALBURY-WODONGA Lady Bandits coach James Ballinger has once again been left frustrated and disappointed following an unsuccessful weekend SEABL road trip.

A week after a drought-breaking away win in Brisbane, the Border outfit crashed back to earth with an 88-58 hammering at the hands of Nunawading on Saturday night.

The Lady Bandits then stayed with the Geelong Lady Supercats for three quarters yesterday before fading in the final term to record a 79-66 defeat.

An all-too-familiar nemesis — the slow start — reared its ugly head against the Lady Spooks on Saturday as the hosts jumped out to a 29-15 quarter-time lead that was never threatened.

Ballinger admitted he was at a loss as to a solution for the early game malaise, going so far as to question his own intensity.

"It was frustrating yesterday that we just didn't show up, didn't come with the fight, energy and effort that we had been," Ballinger said.

"At half-time I said, 'do we really want to be known as the Lady Bandits who are here just to make up the numbers or do we want to be this new Lady Bandits that really take it to teams and teams have to fight hard to win games?'

"I think I have to be sharper, I try to let it ride out and it gets worse, so quicker timeouts and maybe even looking at myself and my energy level."

It was an improved

Bandits 19 28 15 19 (81)
Spectres 23 21 17 14 (75)
At the Nunawading Sports Centre

ALBURY-WODONGA BANDITS

Leading scorers: Nick Payne 18, Jermel Jenkins 16, Alex Opadic 13
Leading rebounders: Flenard Whitfield 9, Jermel Jenkins 9, Ben Hollis 8
Leading assists: Jermel Jenkins 4
FG%: 30/77 39%; 3PT%: 4/26 15%; FT%: 17/21 81%

NUNAWADING SPECTRES

Leading scorers: Shane McDonald 16, Chris Cameron 14, Jesse Caspersz 12, Simon Conn 12
Leading rebounders: Simon Conn 12, Jonathon Shepherd 5, Alex Varrenen 5
Leading assists: Shane McDonald 7
FG%: 26/68 38%; 3PT%: 5/21 24%; FT%: 18/24 75%

Lady Spectres 29 18 21 20 (88)
Lady Bandits 15 14 17 12 (58)

NUNAWADING LADY SPECTRES

Leading scorers: Elli Lovelace 19, Tegan Cunningham 16, Eleanor Brentnall 16
Leading rebounders: Tegan Cunningham 10, Eleanor Brentnall 6, Alyssa Shojil 5
Leading assists: Elli Lovelace 7
FG%: 35/70 50%; 3PT%: 7/18 39%; FT%: 11/16 69%

ALBURY-WODONGA LADY BANDITS

Leading scorers: Rachel Maenpaa 18, Lonnika Thompson 17, Claire Miller 8
Leading rebounders: Rachel Maenpaa 10, Maddy Plunkett 6, Claire Miller 5
Leading assists: Lonnika Thompson 4
FG%: 23/69 33%; 3PT%: 7/23 30%; FT%: 5/9 56%



YESTERDAY
Supercats 28 32 27 17 (104)
Bandits 22 13 26 25 (86)
At The Arena, Geelong

GEELONG SUPERCATS

Leading scorers: Theron Wilson 30, Mike Mercer 16, Nathan Herbert 12, Jamie Medved 12, Ash Cannan 12
Leading rebounders: Theron Wilson 11, Seb Loader 7, Ash Cannan 5, Nick Owusu 5, Nathan Herbert 5
FG%: 39/80 49%; 3PT%: 7/17 41%; FT%: 19/23 83%

ALBURY-WODONGA BANDITS

Leading scorers: Jermel Jenkins 37, Flenard Whitfield 14, Jack Duck 11
Leading rebounders: Ben Hollis 11, Flenard Whitfield 7, Jermel Jenkins 6
Leading assists: Jermel Jenkins 7
FG%: 29/69 42%; 3PT%: 11/25 44%; FT%: 17/24 71%

Lady Supercats 19 18 13 29 (79)
Lady Bandits 20 15 16 15 (66)

GEELONG LADY SUPERCATS

Leading scorers: Sara Blicavs 20, Caitlin Shadboit 17, Courtney Williamson 14
Leading rebounders: Abby Schrader 14, Courtney Williamson 10, Sara Blicavs 7
Leading assists: Courtney Williamson 3, Abby Schrader 3, Candice Rogers 3
FG%: 30/72 42%; 3PT%: 0/12 0%; FT%: 19/25 76%

ALBURY-WODONGA LADY BANDITS

Leading scorers: Rachel Maenpaa 25, Maddy Plunkett 22, Tenille Collins 10
Leading rebounders: Madeline Plunkett 9, Rachel Maenpaa 7, Lonnika Thompson 4
Leading assists: Rachel Maenpaa 4, Lonnika Thompson 4
FG%: 27/66 41%; 3PT%: 5/23 22%; FT%: 7/11 64%



● Lady Bandits import Rachel Maenpaa in action.