

COOLANGATTA ENDS SOUTHPORT'S REIGN

by ROGER MUSPRATT

COOLANGATTA powered to the Gold Coast Australian Football premiership when they booted eight goals to Southport's single six-pointer in the last quarter of their grand final clash at Salk Oval, Currumbin, on Sunday.

Coolangatta's win was never in doubt once the Blues' attacking machine clicked in the final term and they won easily by 20-17 (157) to 13-9 (87).

It was Coolangatta's second premiership in 15 years and only the second time in the past seven years that the Magpies have not taken the flag.

It took the defending premiers 40 minutes to recover. From the shock of Coolangatta's blistering opening to the final term.

Trailing by six points, the Magpies were rescued by quick goals by rovers Scott Brain (2) and Clinton Maxwell and centre half forward Steve Allen.

Kept quiet

Allen's resurgence was one of the reasons for the Blues win. He had been kept quiet for three quarters of the game by Southport's centre half back Dave McMahan.

But Allen gave notice that things were about to change when he took two big marks towards the end of the third quarter.

He went on to dominate the half forward line in the first term, finishing with two goals, one from the boundary line, and gave the final pass for another. Southport seemed to be just standing about, watching as every Coolangatta player lifted his game.

For Williams and Geoff Love were unbeatable in the ruck. John Nimble won his centre battle against Southport's Lynton Kiegan. Ted Liddy ran things around the succession of wingmen that Southport threw at him in an attempt to curb his brilliance.

Despite all the brilliance among the attacking players, much of the hard work in Coolangatta's win was done by half back flanker, Gabe Nuspan.

He gave an outstanding all round display whether taking marks, clearing up around the posts and continually sending the ball out of the danger zone for the Blues.

When Southport started to find their feet in the last quarter, they were 11 points down and shoring defeat in the face.

They managed to halt the procession to the Coolangatta goal when centre half forward Phil Tribble took a mark and converted it for Southport's first goal of the period and his third of the game.

But it was not the start of a relentless Southport fightback. It served to get the Blues attacking machine going again.

Allen booted a towering goal from centre half forward after marking a neat pass from Nuspan. He had a hand at the goal goal when forward pocket player Steve Robbins marked Allen's pass in the goal mouth.

Liddy set up Robbins' second goal of the quarter and third of the match. The wingman marked, played on quickly and sent his pass towards the big sticks.

Blues fire in last quarter

Robbins could not take it cleanly and sent a wobbly kick through for six points.

Coolangatta's final goal capped a fine display by Nicolle. And it was typical 'Needles' stuff.

From the centre, he burst through three half hearted tackles, ran on and sent the ball straight between the posts to bring up Coolangatta's winning margin of 20 points.

Until the last quarter, neither side had been able to make a clear break, although Coolangatta had their noses in front for most of the game.

Southport's Bill Ryan, playing in the back pocket, handed Coolangatta a gift goal when he refused to release the ball after a free had been awarded to Coolangatta captain Kooey Larkin in the first quarter.

The umpire marched Ryan right to the goal line and Larkin made no mistake with the siren.

But Southport fought back and things looked bad for Coolangatta with the Magpies full forward Peter Boyne in fine form, booting three goals for the term. Southport finished a goal in front — 6-2 to 5-2.

Pull forward Alex Helmes put Coolangatta in front with the second of two quick goals at the start of the second period.

Half forward Benker Phil Taghichee followed this with the mark of the day. He tumbled in a spotkicker one handed and converted it to six points.

He followed it immediately with a goal from only two metres out and the Blues went to a half time with a 17 point lead, 10-10 (70) to 8-5 (52). The scores show that the Blues could have been further ahead if they had not squandered so many chances.

In the third quarter, Southport fought back. Tribble scored a crucial booting goal soon after the first centre bounce.

Tribble booted his second goal for the quarter before Craig Pearce put the Magpies back in front. But it was less than long.

Flattened

As the term mounted, spots started to creep into the game, and Tribble, who was causing the Blues defence all sorts of trouble, was flattened in a brawl behind play.

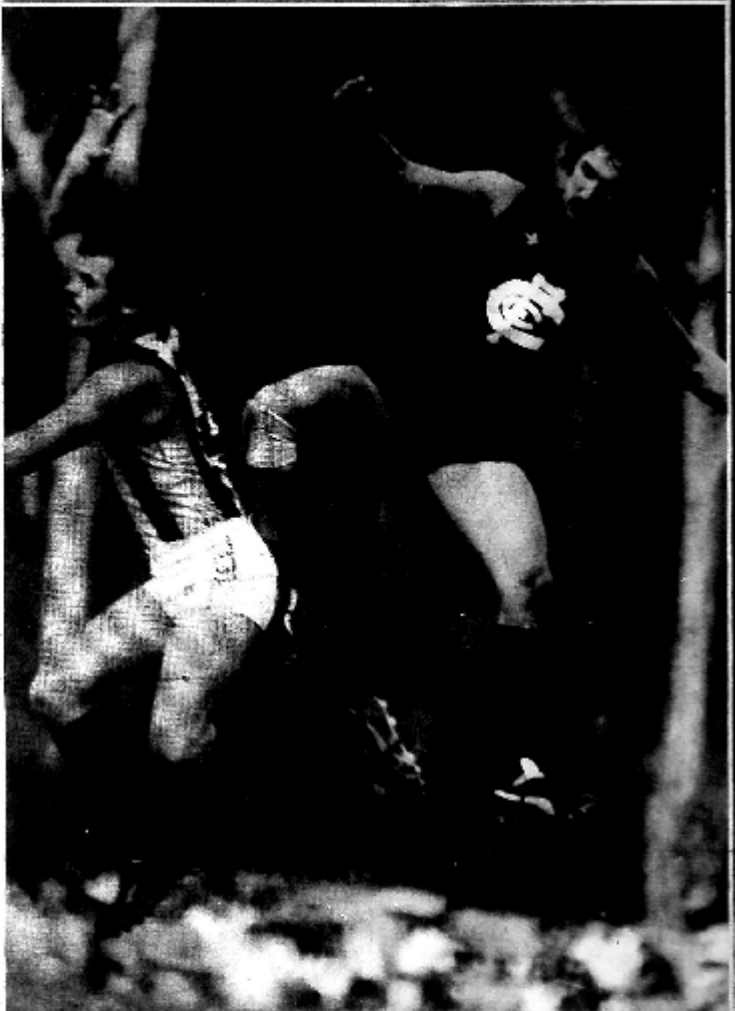
The lanky centre half forward was taken off and did not reappear until the fourth quarter.

Wingman Ray McCulloch edged Coolangatta back into a three quarter time lead when he pounced on a poor Southport kickout from a behind and sent it sailing straight back through the big posts.

Southport had outscored Coolangatta, 4-1 to 3-2 but the Blues held a narrow one goal advantage — 12-12 (84) to 13-6 (78).

With the first three quarters so close, no-one could have predicted Coolangatta's whirlwind finish which ended Southport's two-year reign as Gold Coast premiers.

Gabe gives Magpie the boot



Coolangatta's man of the match, half back flanker Gabe Nuspan, gives Southport's Michael Davidson the boot in Sunday's grand final. Picture by Grant Nowell.

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