

Pies had the heat on Blues in cliff-hanger

THE switch of Zane Taylor from defence to attack late in the fourth quarter proved a winning move for Southport as they snatched the Gold Coast Australian Rules premiership from Coolangatta at Salk Oval, Currumbin, on Sunday.

Southport won 17-16 (118) to 16-19 (115).

Taylor, the best player on the field, frustrated the Coolangatta attacking machine for most of the match at his usual position of centre half back.

With the former state player continually turning back the Blues' attack Southport set up a 31-point lead at half time and appeared to have the match within their grasp.

But Coolangatta, the defending premiers, struck back hard during the brawling third quarter and grabbed the lead in the final term.

At that stage, the Magpies appeared a beaten team with Coolangatta creating the extra man in attack with their play-on handball style.

However, Southport swung Taylor into the centre in a final desperate bid and the Pies responded magnificently to hit the front in the dying seconds of the game and win by three points.

The Blues opened with the assistance of a stiff breeze, but the Magpies scored an early goal when Brian Lowe marked close in.

Southport was matching the Blues for pace with Sel Short, Rob Simpson and Ken Clark prominent early.

Rocky Larkin and Bruce Fraser were steady in defence for the Blues whilst the roaming John Nierdle was scouting cleverly to give the Blues chances.

However, they squandered easy shots with poor kicking.

The Magpies were applying plenty of pressure and the Blues were making lots of mistakes and couldn't get their running systematic game going.

Taylor was a stumbling block as he patrolled the entire half back line with uncanny anticipation to halt persistent attacks.

Two goals by ace forward Rob Rankine and a long goal into the breeze by John Hinkley and only a point separated the sides at the first change, with the honours of the quarter clearly Southport's.

Neither side was producing much teamwork, but the game was played at a cracking pace and hard tackling forced the players into hasty and often wayward disposal.

Short was playing a great game and the Pies grabbed a handy lead when he, Clark and Apted goaled. They held the initiative and had the Coolangatta defence at full stretch.

The reliable Rankine was on target for two valuable goals, but the Magpies would not be denied.

Clark, Rosin and Lowe each goaled to give them a 31 points advantage at half time.

Southport looked ominous during the second term as Ryan and Hopkin's were marking strongly and they were outpacing the Blues forward line.

During a major dust up in which half the players were involved, play swept from the Coolangatta forward line to Southport's scoring zone for Lowe to goal virtually unopposed.

Coolangatta looked more business-like as they swung into action with a flying goal by Gary Watt.

Mick Kulken was a great player for the

Blues and he and Watts were largely instrumental in the recovery.

Goals by Kulken and two more to Rankine and the Blues were right back in the game.

The intense strain was beginning to tell on the players as a series of fights broke out.

However play was permitted to flow on by the umpires and the huge crowd simmered with excitement.

It was hard, tough and at times, savage as players bit the dust and the first aid men worked overtime to patch up the gladiators.

The Blues came right back into calculations. Their defence was much tighter and Watt injected some bite into the attack where Rankine had been the only effective forward.

A snap goal by Danny Dwyer early in the final term levelled the scores and the crowd settled down for a frantic final term.

Barry Teague and Dave Morrison, the Blues roving duo, started to run and Leon Tucker took a strong grab close in for another goal.

The Blues were finishing full of running and Dwyer's second goal put them further in front.

Digger Apted outsped the defence to take a Ryan handball and goal, but Rankine scored his eighth goal on the rebound to restore Coolangatta's 16 points.

Taylor, who had starred for Southport in defence, was swung into the centre and was a driving force behind Southport's final flurry.

First Apted goaled, then Ryan from a disputed mark close in the difference was three points to the Blues.

The crowd erupted onto the playing field and lined the boundary to urge on their weary heroes and when Ken Clark snapped the goal to give the Magpies the lead in the final seconds, the Pies scored a great victory and another flag in an unforgettable grand final.

Gold Coast Bulletin: September 25 1979, p63

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