

Doc tries to figure out what could go so wrong

by GREG STOLZ

THE Doc lifted his slurred voice above the din in the Southport Australian Football Club rooms.

It was a loud, raucous din. A victory celebration, of course.

The Doc was hardly celebrating.

Dr Alan Mackenzie, president of the Southport Magpies Australian Football Club, was drowning his sorrows in the wake of a Blue, Blue Sunday.

It was the morning after the day before when the Southport A grade side were belted blue — and black — by Coolangatta in the Gold Coast Australian Rules grand final at Salk Oval, Currumbin.

Earlier on Sunday, the Pies Under 19s team were mercilessly mauled by Burleigh Heads.

Worsened

The downslide worsened as the day wore on when the seemingly invincible Southport Reserve grade side proved they are after all, only human, by succumbing to Harold Davies' gallant Broadbeach Cats.

The Reserves, defending premiers, had traversed two glorious seasons without a loss to their name.

Until Sunday.

Then the Southport A grade side — the great black and white hope — tumbled pitifully to the boisterous, barraging Blues.

The Doc had no cause to celebrate.

He hesitated, contemplating the answer to the obvious question — what went wrong?

Doc Mackenzie replied with the inevitable cliché. "Coolangatta were the better side on the day," he ventured.

Another pause, swamped by a cacophony of song, laughter and tinkling glasses in the background. It was going to be a long interview.

"The difference between the two sides," he started again. "Was that Coolangatta kept playing the ball. They followed it ruthlessly, relentlessly."

A breakthrough at last. The Doc continued his post-mortem.

"Our smaller players need space. Their game is to run back into the play and look for players running down the ground."

'Magnificent'

"Coolangatta's pressure was so good, we couldn't get our game going. They kept the pressure on too long. It was magnificent."

"I can't take anything away from Coolangatta."

There was no hesitation to the question that perhaps, on that performance, the Doc had reservations about his club joining the cut-throat QAFL Brisbane competition next season.

"No, none whatsoever," he said. "I've got no trepidation at all about going to Brisbane."

"We'll need some more players, especially forward line players. I've always said forward lines win matches."

"But I'm just happy we are getting away from it all — the sniping and lack of discipline and the crowds running onto the field."

"I just think that's sick. There is almost a sadistic attitude on the Gold Coast that you have got to go out on the field and get hit."

"I've been in football administration nine years and still I don't know what the answer is."

The din was beckoning the Doc back to the bar. When your football team has been through 100 minutes of bruising football and lost the premiership, it's not hard to understand why beer is thicker than blood.