

Do-or-die for Bees after dismal defeat

Werribee will have no margin for error in the final round if it wants to be part of the Bowls Victoria division 1 finals action.

The Bees chose the worst time of the season to produce arguably their most disappointing performance on Saturday.

The Bees fell heavily, 128-56, on the road to Sunbury, failing to pick up a point in a miserable outing against a team one spot above them on the ladder.

The Bees desperately need to bounce back from heavy defeats across all rinks.

With Fitzroy Victoria and Essendon breathing down their necks, the Bees need to win this Saturday if they are to keep hold of their finals berth.

The Bees will meet Essendon in a last-round blockbuster at Chirnside Park.

Meanwhile, Hoppers also copped that bitter taste of defeat in the second-last round.

It might not have been as dire for Hoppers, though, which remains in second spot, 16 points clear inside the top four and almost



Ian Milledge's quartet suffered a heavy defeat on Saturday, as did all of Werribee's rinks.

(Damjan Janevski)

certain to figure in finals. Hoppers is fighting tooth and nail to keep its place in the top two, though, and must beat third-placed Flemington-Kensington to lock up that crucial second spot.

It was finals come early for Hoppers on

Saturday in a thrilling 85-80 loss to Port Melbourne on the road. Hoppers picked up four valuable points to keep it in second place on the back of rink wins to skips Billy Russell (22-16) and Steve Bartlett (29-26).

Bartlett is looking forward to another finals-like game against Flemington-Kensington to determine the second seed for the finals.

"Our destiny is still in our own hands, so next week's match should be a thriller like today," Bartlett said.

"It all came down to Port's last bowl of the day today.

"With Dennis Hewitt's rink holding five shots, the opposition skip cleaned out the head and took one shot to thwart us of what would have been a hard-fought draw.

"In a match that could have gone either way, we can take some solace from a match that was played on a very difficult green."

Lance Jenkinson



IN THE DOGHOUSE

Brad Murphy, the former Western Bulldog, is back in local footy as coach of the St Albans seniors in the WRFL – but he is making his mark in other areas as well. Brad has become an ambassador and public voice of Adopt Change and Ladder. Both organisations are working for change in adoption laws and awareness in Australia, where adoption numbers are very low. Brad was put into foster care at 16 months after his father was jailed and his mother did a runner. Both were drug addicts. Brad considers himself one of the lucky ones, as he stayed with the same family, which eventually adopted him when they legally could at age 18. The organisations are always looking for financial help. adoptchange.org.au

I don't think I have ever seen a funnier guest speaker than Greg Ritchie, who told some hilarious stories at the long lunch run by the Williamstown CYMS Cricket Club last Friday. The former Test batsman – universally known as Fat Cat – had the crowd begging for more, even after more than an hour of stories. Controversy has followed the popular Queenslander in recent years as the PC police analyse and dissect his every word. In all honesty, he is not offensive – he is funny and not the least bit degrading to anyone. There are people who find the most beige comments worthy of a national campaign. There is nothing you can do about that. I had not seen him live before, but like everyone in the room, I am a big fan now.

Willy CYs look to have unearthed a find in Chris Jackson, who made the Victorian under-15 side for the schoolboy carnival recently and showed some skill as a leg-spinner of the future. He has already played some senior cricket. The VTCA final round is this weekend, with finals spots up for grabs. In the top division, all top four positions could change, especially if Spotswood defeats Yarraville Club. In the subbies, Werribee won't decide its own fate after a draw last week saw it fall out of the six. Hoppers Crossing will rely on a fairytale finish to go any further than this weekend.

Apologies to Spotswood Cricket Club, which I called Williamstown last week. The Spotty boys have their president's lunch on March 2, with Kevin Bartlett. Tickets are going fast through Mark Cranwell on 0425 780 096.

Kevin Hillier

Any news, let me know on email kevin@howdypartnersmedia.com.au. Follow me on Twitter @KevinHillier, plus check out the Howdy Partners Media website as well.

Cats move in for the kill

By Lance Jenkinson

Hoppers Crossing is proving to be the giant-killer of the Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association north-west first XI.

The Cats beat the eventual premiers in each of their first two seasons in the competition and have now knocked off top side Melton.

"We've beaten the premier and now the top side in every year that we've played," a proud Cats captain-coach Greg Kennedy said.

Incredibly, the eighth-ranked Hoppers Crossing will enter the final round of the season with a mathematical chance of reaching the finals. The Cats will have to beat Williamstown, who, you guessed it, profited from the Cats victory over Melton and moved to the top of the ladder.

If they can pull off the upset over Williamstown, the Cats will also need Yarraville and local rivals Werribee to lose to leap-frog those sides into the top six.

Kennedy was just excited to see his team take another big scalp in Melton and was looking forward to the game against Williamstown.

"We sang the song with gusto and we're proud of our performance," he said.

"We now have to beat the new top side next week and rely on other results to go our way."

Hoppers Crossing was never out of its comfort zone in Saturday's win over Melton.

The Cats were set a victory target of 136 and methodically picked off the runs.

Kennedy even decided to declare on 8-202, holding a lead of 67, in an audacious outright bid that he described as a "one in a million" chance, but was eventually denied by bad light.

"There was a tree at one end behind the bowler and [Brandon] Diplock went around the wicket and the batsman said he couldn't see the ball coming out of that tree," Kennedy said.

"We offered to bowl over the wicket, but the umpires deemed the ball would still be coming out of that tree, then we offered to bowl off spin, but the umpire still deemed the tree to be an issue. It was certainly unlikely for us to bowl them out in 26 overs, but we thought we'd like the opportunity."

The first innings win was secured on the back of some smart batting.

Cameron Nicol applied the grit and determination at the top of the order with 23 before Will Partington-Gardner (60), Brett Smith (22), Justin Goegan (36) and first gamer Bryce Stuart (23) brought it home.

Partington-Gardner's knock was the difference between the two sides.



Bryce Stuart bowls in a first XI debut to remember for Hoppers Crossing with 3-36 and 23 in a winning side. (Mark Wilson)

More cricket: Page 93