

High winds make tough riding in Altona

With a strong and blustery north-westerly howling and dark clouds threatening rain, Footscray Cycling Club riders converged upon Altona's much-loved Drake Boulevard circuit to contest the Eric Turner Memorial Club Criterium Championships.

A series of blistering tailwind attacks in the A-grade race saw the field thinned down considerably before the 30-minute mark, at which point the riders unleashed a series of serious attacks.

Reigning club criterium and road champion Dominik Dudkiewicz was a marked man stuck in the bunch.

"I think the head and tail wind meant it was hard breaking up the bunch and everyone seemed to have a plan that I wasn't part of," he said. "Every time I got into a break it seemed to stall. With five laps to go I was frustrated and stuck."

So Dudkiewicz took a gamble and set out to get to the leading riders.

"I knew I had to bridge to the guys up the road or I would regret it," he said.

"I got to Brad Erickson, who was in no-man's-land, hoping to join forces, but he was cooked. So I kept going and got on to Miles DaCosta and Lachlan Marshal and recovered somewhat. I knew that once I got there I could take the sprint."

Dudkiewicz did indeed take the sprint, finishing three bike lengths clear of DaCosta and Marshal, with Jason Costin taking the bunch sprint in behind.

In the women's open race, after a civilised few laps, the attacks started and within 20 minutes the field was split into two bunches. The front bunch of four then split into two bunches of two after Diane Edwards threw in an attack in an attempt to get away solo to victory.

That left Edwards in a great position with Erika Gosney and reigning champion Sarah Dam in hot pursuit with Jill Stevenson.

Gosney and Edwards kept the pressure up and maintained their lead over the chasers and then began positioning themselves for the sprint to the line.

As they headed into the sprint, Edwards' gears refused to index for several precious seconds, which meant she lost valuable momentum.

Edwards and Gosney approached the line side by side, with Gosney taking the win by a tyre width.

Williamstown youngster John Ross took out B grade, Altona Meadows rider Ben Redpath won C grade and Werribee veteran Tommy Gray took out D grade at the age of 75.

Mark Micallef



IN THE DOGHOUSE

■ Former world boxing champion Barry Michael left Williamstown to do the Kokoda trek a few weeks back, but unfortunately it did not turn out well. After six days of pretty intense trekking, torrential rain made the track more hazardous than normal. Barry fell and re-injured his ribs, but soldiered on until he could take no more. He was in a bad way and had to be choppered to the nearest hospital. He cried, not from the physical pain of his broken ribs and bruises, but from the emotional toll of seeing what our brave soldiers went through. Barry's father, Len, 94, was a British fighter pilot in WWII. Barry is back home and recovering and will be ready for his next big fight night (as a promoter) on April 13 at Melbourne Pavilion.

■ Another western suburbs icon passed last week, with the death of Williamstown Football Club Legend Gerry Callahan. "The Monster" was a colossus on and off the field with a big personality to match his unbelievable football career. He was a Seagulls legend, captain of the Team of the Century, five-time premiership captain and coached the club to two flags. He played 171 games and kicked 75 goals, with the club best and fairest medal named in his honour. Condolences from all sports fans in the west to Peggy and Gerry's family and friends. A great man. RIP.

■ The Yarrville Club Cricket Club is a flag magnet. In another win in the senior VTCA competition, the boys from Hansen Reserve did it in fine style on the back of another lion-hearted bowling display from Evan Bronca. The veteran took 7-50 off 25 overs. Will Sheridan steered the side home with an unbeaten century assisted by Ben Tupper, who was 50 not out. In the subbies, Williamstown defeated Kew to take the premiership. Tim Gage took a match-winning 5-12 to get Werribee home in the twos.

■ The top end of Australian rules footy might be in great shape financially, but local clubs continue to struggle, with Keilor Park the latest to pull the pin in the EDFL and have its senior men's teams go into recess. In the WRFL, all eyes will be on Glenorden, which is returning after a similar break. It will be very tough, but the Hawks have been through a lot in recent years. I wish them the best and hope they get the support, on and off the field, they need to make the club strong again.

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Reds' loss overturned

By Lance Jenkinson

Hoppers Crossing has been awarded all three points from its season opening clash with Sydenham Park in the Football Federation Victoria men's state league 1 at Grange Reserve on March 24.

The Reds were notified last week that Sydenham Park had used an ineligible player, so their 1-0 loss was overturned to a 3-0 victory.

The player in question was Sydenham Park star Koce Delev, who actually scored the winning goal in the game.

Delev had accumulated a fifth yellow card towards the end of last season, which carries a one-game suspension the following league game, which happened to be the round one clash with Hoppers Crossing.

"It's a little mix-up on their behalf," Hoppers Crossing coach Shaun Barbara said.

"To be fair, I don't think there was any malice in it from Sydenham Park.

"I think that they thought he had served his suspension in the FFA Cup, which could've been a simple mistake made unfortunately.

"Like anything, you've just got to abide by the rules, and we've been given the three points."

It is the first time in Barbara's career that he has been involved in a game where his team has been awarded points on a technicality.

Barbara is not comfortable with the manner in which the points were received, but he felt that Hoppers Crossing did enough in the game to get something out of it.

"Realistically, you never want to take points off somebody in this kind of way," he said.

"You always want to be able to do that on the park.

"To be fair, I thought over the course of the game we deserved something out of the game anyway."

It was Hoppers Crossing's first game since being promoted to state league 1.

The Reds went in as underdogs but took it up to a Sydenham Park team that has been a strong club in this division for a long time.

"I think we'd feel like a thief if we played terribly, they had absolutely smashed us and here we are taking three points from them, I would've felt embarrassed almost," Barbara said.

"But the fact we put in an absolutely ripping performance for our first game against what is a top five side in state 1 and had them on the ropes for a little bit, maybe it's a bit of good karma coming back our way.

"They had the equal amount of chances, but I thought over the course of the game, we were the better side, we played some really good football."

It was a big day for Hoppers Crossing with a huge turnout to see how their side would



Hoppers Crossing's Daniel Sweeney takes front position against Sydenham Park's Milos Ilic.
(Damjan Janevski)

fare in a new division. Barbara reckons his newly-promoted team showed it will be no pushover this campaign.

"It was a fantastic day to be a part of," Barbara said. "They're certainly one of the better sides in the competition and to be able to compete with them in our first game was really positive.

"The Sydenham Park fans were brilliant, they dug deep ... Our fans were second to none as they always are, so it was an absolutely ripping day and a good introduction into the league."

Sydenham Park said "the club has no comment on this matter" when contacted by *Star Weekly*.