

Roos get jump on Sharks — favourites left floundering

DESIRE means to long for or want earnestly.

Sadly for the Southport Sharks, that word was missing from their match dictionary as they crashed to a shock defeat at the hands of Coorparoo in Sunday's Queensland Australian Football League grand final at Windsor Park in Brisbane.

In a stunning turn-around, the Roos reversed a 98-point hiding at the hands of the Sharks in the major semi-final two weekends ago, to win the only match of the year that counts, by 10 points.

Southport were never really in the hunt and surrendered their 1985 premiership in disappointing and almost tame fashion by 12-16 (88) to 11-12 (78).

It was simply a case of a football team beating a team of footballers — the underdogs (Coorparoo) dictating terms to the 7-4 on pre-match favourites throughout the slogging affair.

Coorparoo had the desire to win, Southport didn't — for three quarters at least.

Southport finished much the stronger, but it was far too late. The horse (or kangaroo in this case) had bolted.

From the opening bounce, the Roos' desperation showed. They wanted the ball and let nothing stand in their way.

The Southport players, by comparison, were strangely subdued for a team touted as likely to be too physical and disciplined.

But the reverse applied. It was the Roos who led the chase for possession, who outnumbered the Sharks around the packs, and who pursued their opponents relentlessly when not in possession.

Shark coach Norm Dare summed the result up perfectly when he said Southport saved one of their worst efforts of the year for the grand final.

"I think we showed how good we really are because we played as badly as we

by TERRY WILSON

possibly could, yet only got beaten by 10 points," he said.

"We were beaten by a better side and have no excuses. They were too good on the day.

"They wanted the ball more, they ran harder. We played kick to kick football and how we got to within 10 points ... bloody hell, I don't know."

The return to the half-back line of former VFL player Kevin O'Keefe made a world of difference to Coorparoo.

O'Keefe, who missed the major semi-final through injury, was absolutely superb in defence. He repeatedly turned the Southport players around with clearing dashes that invariably linked up with a multitude of loose men roaming across the centre of the ground.

And the Roos cut the toothless Sharks to pieces in the running department where dual Grogan medallist Brendan McMullen was in brilliant touch, turning in by far his best match against Southport.

But McMullen and O'Keefe were not alone.

They had willing team-mates all over the ground, from defenders Greg Page and Kelvin Millar, ruck-rovers Andy Colenso and Gary Becker, big men Paul Ross and Les Millar, and high-flying utility Glen Hutcheson.

Southport had few solid contributors — about five or six, according to Dare.

Trevor Surman, who started at centre half-back but was moved to the forwards in an attempt to spark the attack, was clearly Southport's best player.

Ruck-roller Mark Frawley, wingman Darren Carlson, ruckmen Peter Guy and Gary Dempsey and defender Ross Hillary, who finished playing in the centre, were the pick of the remainder.



Coorparoo rover Ian Wilson uses Southport opponent John Millane as a launching pad as he flies for a spectacular mark in Sunday's QAFL grand final in Brisbane. Coorparoo staged a stunning form reversal to down hot favourites Southport by 10 points. Pictures — MURRAY RIX

Tigers break 17 year drought

by HEDLEY THOMAS

WITH the old adage 'a champion team will always beat a team of champions' ringing in their ears, Labrador Tigers powered into the Gold Coast Australian Football League grand final with a startling thrashing of premiers Palm Beach.

Labrador had not beaten the Lions since 1979 but hoodoos counted for nothing in Sunday's preliminary final at Cooke-Murphy Oval.

The Tigers put together an astonishing four quarters of powerhouse football and at precisely 5.05pm won the right to contest their first grand final in 17 years by demolishing the Lions 23-20 (158) to 7-3 (45).

A casual observer would have been forgiven for thinking Labrador had just won the flag when it erupted into celebration after the final footer.

It was a classic example of the underdog battling against the odds and coming through.

Labrador, who only two months ago established their club rooms, had struggled to make the final four with Burleigh Heads and Ashmore-Nerang breathing down their necks.

And injuries had ravaged the Tigers den, severely testing depth.

But the fast emerging giant killers were not going to be intimidated by last year's premiers and were consistently first to the ball.

Despite wasted opportunities in the first term, Labrador led by nine points after Palm Beach ruck-roller Geoff James had kept his side in the match with two late goals.

The Tigers virtually sealed the match in the second term by kicking 45 points to Palm Beach's 12.

And once they scented victory there was no looking back.

Kevin Bradmore's bewildered Lions, backing up after a bruising encounter with Coolangatta, savoured the half-time break but were again outscored.

But there was more to come with the Tigers saving their best for the last quarter, slapping on 68 points while holding Palm Beach scoreless.

And for the second time in as many games, Labrador president Bob Holmes felt compelled to dip into the club's coffers and reward every player with cash bonuses.

Mr Holmes summed up the situation yesterday when he said: "Five games ago I thought that making the finals was going to be a hard job but now the flag is there for the taking.

"We spent a lot of money on the players again last night but they thoroughly deserved it.

"In the past we have lost top footballers to every club on the Gold Coast but now the vacuum should stop because we have something to offer.

"Labrador has come of age."

Once again, the experience of full-forward Peter Kinnaird and the agility of 17-year-old goal thief Jason Howard combined superbly.

The 19-year-old Paul Drever (best afield), ruckman Larry Herberston, club best and fairest Rod Morgan, ruck-roller Rod Hall and utility Cliff Holland were voted Labrador's top five on the day.

Labrador's 'finest hour' this season was recorded and will be shown at the club on Thursday night.

Palm Beach president David Peck said last week's major semi with Coolangatta had taken its toll, though he refused to use it as an excuse.

"Without taking anything away from Labrador, we did nothing at all on the day so perhaps the size of the win might be a bit of a false impression," he said.

"We'll hold our heads high and accept defeat on the chin."

Best players for Palm Beach were Chris Wright, Drew Burge, Graham Manning, Alan Markey, Ley Derrick and Mick McGregor.

Reserves salvage a victory

SOUTHPORT reserves grabbed their club's only premiership this season by winning a spiteful, brawling Queensland Australian Football League grand final against Mayne on Sunday.

In a torrid affair, spiced with outbreaks of all-in brawling and behind-the-play violence, the Sharks outgassed Mayne to win by 14-17 (101) to 9-9 (63) and complete an undefeated run this season.

The reserves win was the only bright spot for the Sharks, who fielded sides in all four QAFL grand finals for one premiership.

The aftermath of Sunday's bloodbath was a total of 12 reports laid by the umpires — seven against Southport players and five against Mayne — the majority of them for striking.

Those to have their names taken were Neil Gibson (twice), Milton Davis (twice), John Glynn, Darren Brookes and Sean Wollington from Southport and Mayne's Peter Allison (twice), Jim Hickman, Mick Glover and Neil O'Brien.

It was a vicious match with little separating the sides until the latter stages of the third quarter when, after the most bitter of the brawls, Southport jumped to a 24-point lead.

From that point, Mayne dropped their bundle and managed just 2-3 for the remainder of the match to Southport's 4-5.

The result was a triumph for coach Barry Rudd, who notched up his seventh premiership win with Southport.

He described the effort as by far the most satisfying of his long term at Owen Park.

"The boys were tremendous," he said.

"I didn't give us much chance of winning because we were without Terry Wilkins, Rob Waugh and Brett Newman.

"But the guys who went out there really put in. I'm extremely proud of them."

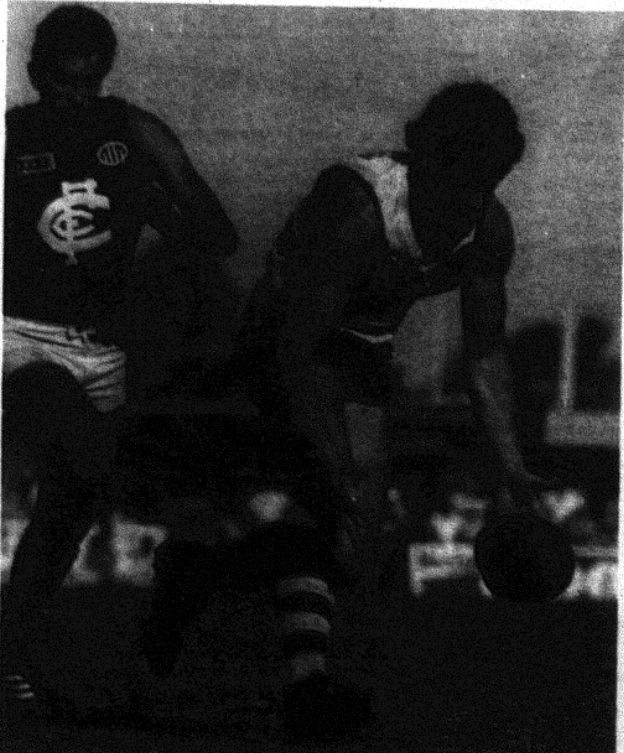
Stars for Southport were demoted utility John Glynn, dropped from the senior side for the first time this year, defender Neil Gibson, ruckman Shane Mangan, winger Mal Davies and veteran ruck-roller Sel Short.

● A LACK of height in key positions brought Southport's Colts undone in their grand final against Mayne on Saturday.

The Tiger tall timber ruled supreme throughout the match before Mayne recorded a 27-point win — kicking 12-18 (90) to 9-9 (63).

It was a disappointing was for the young Sharks to finish the season off.

They were undefeated until the major semi-final two weekends ago.



Mark Frawley, one of Southport's few consistent players, leads Coorparoo rival Gary Becker in the race for the ball.