

BIG TEST FOR EAGLES

Corio confident against competition 'heavyweight'

Tonci Prusac

Corio will be aiming to chalk up its third win of the season when it hosts Sydenham Park in round 7 of the Men's State League 1 (NorthWest) later today.

The Eagles last week defeated FC Strathmore 2-0, courtesy of goals from Darcy Rapa and Mitchell Stosic, and in the process leapfrogged near neighbours Geelong into sixth spot on the standings.

A win against Sydenham Park would see Corio jump into the top echelon of the State 1 competition, an incredible turnaround considering



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Ivan Biscan, pictured

that in the last few years the Hume Reserve outfit has been constantly battling to stave off relegation.

"With the club being in relegation battles at the tail-end for the previous two seasons,

the playing group, my assistant Miki Gelic and myself have really set a target that it would not be the case this season," head coach Ivan Biscan, who took over from Robbie Noggler on the eve of the sea-

son, said this week. "I do believe the results, thus far, has proven that. The senior squad has really matured to State 1 football this season, and there is great competition for spots within the team."

Last week, the Eagles were able to comfortably beat a team they'd been unable to take a point from last season.

This week, however, Biscan believes the clash with the ambitious third-placed visitors will pose much more of a problem. "This week's task is a lot harder against one of the heavyweights of the competition, Sydenham Park, but we are confident going into the

match that our strengths will get us a winning result," he said. "That is where our focus has been all the week at training."

In team news out of Hume Reserve, fullback Callum Ferguson will miss this weekend's game against Sydenham Park, after sustaining a hamstring strain last week.

Meanwhile, following last week's shock 2-0 loss at home to FC Clifton Hill, Geelong will be looking to get back onto the winners' list when the Lions travel to Ralph Reserve to tackle fourth-placed Western Suburbs on Saturday.

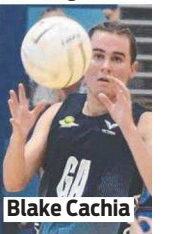
Both games kick-off at 3pm.

Cachia's waiting game for selection

Meg Saultry

Blake Cachia faces a nervous wait to learn whether he will represent Australia in 2024.

Cachia, up for selection in Australia's 20-and-under men's netball squad, was one of several players across the Geelong region invited to trial for national roster spots this month, with Alistair Punched, Riley Richardson and Brodie Roberts to attend the Kelpies' men's national side/Fast 5 camp, while Aidan Conheady, a Camperdown teenager connected to Geelong Cougars, is eyeing a place in the 17-and-under squad.



Blake Cachia

Cachia, who took up netball at 11 and represented Australia in 2022 in its 17-and-under squad, was identified during Victoria's recent silver-medal run at the Australian Men's Netball Championships in Brisbane.

After missing out on selection last year, the 18-year-old sports science student said he was driven to get himself back in contention in the higher age bracket.

"I really wanted to push myself to get into this one," he said. "The age difference, it just means bigger bodies and you're up against stronger people, so you need to be able to take in all that physical demand."

Cachia, who can play across the centre, wing attack and goal attack positions, pushed his case for selection at a three-day camp on Sydney's Northern Beaches last week.

Focused around match-play, the Werribee-based Cachia said he was pleased how he performed, considering he and the other 21 players in attendance had to form on-court connections quickly.

"I thought I did pretty well and I'm hoping to make it into the team," he said.

Cachia is now forced to wait up to six weeks before final teams are announced in June while other camps play out across the country this month.

Until then, he will focus on coaching Geelong Netball Associations' boys representative team, a role he took up last year and shares with Adam Franz.



Michael Graham, Joe Rossi, Julia Mitchell, Cayson Graham, Alichia McLaren, Charley Donohue and Craig Jacka at 'Town & Country Pizza Oval' ahead of Saturday's clash against North Geelong. Picture: Brad Fleet

TIGERS' PIZZA PAIRING PUTS PEOPLE FIRST

Meg Saultry

Thomson Tigers hope to take care of their community by piloting a new initiative in partnership with a prominent local business.

The Tigers have rebranded their Godfrey St home as Town & Country Pizza Oval ahead of Saturday's round 6 GDFNL home clash against North Geelong.

But Town & Country Pizza and Thomson will go a step beyond its oval sponsorship and existing clubroom digital takeaway kiosk by launching a program that looks at addressing prevalent social issues, including homelessness, hunger or educational disparities.

The Taking Care of People initiative will see people able to nominate and reward

"local legends" who are either battling or doing extraordinary work in the community.

Thomson co-president Craig Jacka welcomed the sponsorship, which would allow the club to continue to offer quality facilities and programs for their members, including free memberships for all junior footballers and netballers.

Jacka believed the Taking Care of People initiative with Town & Country Pizza would also add further value to the Thomson community.

"We all know things can get tough and no one is exempt and sometimes a helping hand is needed and if this initiative can provide that help we as a club are 100 per cent behind it," Jacka said.

Town & Country Pizza managing director Joe Rossi was excited to pilot the initiative with Thomson.

"They (Thomson) are a great catalyst and a very good example of delivering what is most important to the club and its community," Rossi said.

"We hope to support and assist them in whatever that may be."

Cavs surge past Celtics

Donovan Mitchell led a comprehensive Cleveland team effort as the Cavaliers powered past the top-seeded Celtics 118-94 in Boston to level their NBA Eastern Conference semi-final series at one game apiece on Friday.

Mitchell scored 23 of his 29 points in the second half and received plenty of support from aggressive teammates as the Cavs bounced back from a game-one rout.

Evan Mobley, 22, got Cleveland going early, scoring 15 of his playoff career-high 21 points in the first half. Mobley added 10 rebounds and five assists and reserve guard Caris LeVert added 21 points off the bench for Cleveland, who had six players score in double figures.

"I like the way that we were just attack-minded," Cavaliers coach J.B. Bickerstaff said.



Donovan Mitchell

Leverkusen 'dream' still alive

Bayer Leverkusen is through to the Europa League final 4-2 on aggregate after a stoppage-time goal from Josip Stanic snatched a 2-2 draw at home on Friday, extending its unbeaten run to a record 49 games.

In a rematch of last season's Europa League semi-final, Roma came to Leverkusen 2-0 down after the first leg but levelled the tie up despite having little possession thanks to pen-

alties in each half from Leandro Paredes.

With the tie heading for extra time, Alex Grimaldo curled in a corner which goalie Mile Svilar failed to catch, the ball going into the net after bouncing off Roma defender Gianluca Mancini.

Stanic then kept Leverkusen's stunning record of late goals alive by scoring on the counter in the seventh minute of added time, breaking Benfi-

ca's European unbeaten record dating back to 1965.

"We're in the final, we're on our way to making our dream a reality and will do everything to bring the trophy back to Leverkusen," midfielder Granit Xhaka said.

The Bundesliga champions will meet Atalanta, who beat Marseille 3-0 (4-1 on aggregate), in the final in Dublin on May 22 with hopes of a remarkable treble still alive.