

Giants' first-quarter crash damages title hopes

AMANDA LULHAM

THE Giants squandered home advantage as the worst opening quarter in the western Sydney side's history cost them automatic qualification into Super Netball's grand final.

The minor premiers went

down 63-57 to West Coast Fever in yesterday's semi-final at Sydney Olympic Park and must now win next Sunday's preliminary final to earn a shot at revenge against the Perth side in the title match.

In an extraordinary opening stanza, the Giants found

themselves down by as many as nine goals.

"It was just a horrific start," said Giants captain Kim Green. "There's a lot to learn from this and we will have to learn it quickly.

"We simply don't care who we play in the preliminary

final. We'll be ready for either of them."

Criticised for their reliance on Jhaniele Fowler, the Fever won without the league's leading shooter for 13 crucial minutes of the game after she limped off the court with a knee injury. When Fowler

went off after just 12 minutes, the Fever were leading 15-7. When she returned, heavily strapped, the Giants had reduced their deficit to 22-25.

What followed was an arm wrestle, with the Giants working overtime to regain control of the match but unable to

make up the deficit. Fever led at the end of every quarter.

"We pulled together much better when Jhaniele returned to the court, which is encouraging," Green said.

Despite time sidelined, Fowler did not miss once in her 48 shots at goal.



Chris Kent hammers one down the ground during his chanceless 146 for PINT against Waratah at Marrara yesterday

Picture: KERI MEGELUS

Kent's classy ton puts PINT on the front foot

JOSH SPASARO

PINT No.4 batsman Chris Kent mixed rock-solid defence with brilliant attack on his way to a potentially matchwinning 146 as his side posted 302 all-out against Waratah at Marrara yesterday.

Kent hit 15 fours and two sixes in his 3½-hour innings in the clash between two Darwin Premier Grade teams inside the top four.

"Chris is a very talented batsman, and can take the ground or aerial route with his

shots. He took the Waratah attack to pieces," said PINT club captain Simon Lavers, who fell lbw to Jack Kessell for 4.

Uli Van Duyker (37 off 30 balls), Josh Neill (32) and Lewis English (31) also chipped in with the willow and Lavers said his team was confident it could defend its total this Saturday.

"We'll back ourselves. Our bowling has been the best part of our game this year," he said. "We worked hard during the week and our batsmen went out there understanding what roles they needed to play.

"It was nice to see one of our players score a hundred for the first time this season.

"It was a chanceless innings from Chris."

Kessell was the pick of the "Tah bowlers, taking 4-51, while spinner James Seymour claimed 3-70.

Palmerston also holds the advantage against Nightcliff at Cazalys Oval, the hosts setting the Tigers 314 to win.

Nightcliff's cause was not helped by a slow over rate, and as a result the Power had 30 runs added to their score.

Will Hamilton (69), Robbie Van Der Meulen (53), Todd McCann (48), Christian Leopard (40) and Kieran Toner (33) all made valuable contributions at good scoring rates.

"All of those guys batted well. Toddy batted really well at the end after we were 6-208," keeper-batsman Van Der Meulen said. "The game will be won or lost in the first hour next week, when hopefully we can get some early wickets."

Paceman Jayden Brown was the standout for the visitors, taking 4-52.

And Tracy Village already has first-innings points against Southern Districts at Fred's Pass, thanks mainly to spinner Hamish Martin's 5-20, with the Crocodiles only managing 99 all-out.

Village is 3-163 in reply, with opener Joe Randall unbeaten on 61.

"We've worked so hard without getting results this season, so to have to back-to-back wins is really exciting," Martin said. "It was a bit of a tricky wicket so that worked in my favour."

Anderson takes five to help rout India

JIMMY Anderson has shown he remains a deadly proposition in home conditions as he took 5-20 to help England bowl out India for a miserly 107 on the second day of the second Test at Lord's.

After the entire first day was lost to rain, further wet conditions forced a delayed start.

England captain Joe Root eventually won the toss and put India into bat.

Anderson, 36, took full advantage of the overcast conditions with some outstanding swing bowling.

It was the sixth time he had produced a five-wicket haul at Lord's and he now has 99 Test wickets at the famous London venue.

For much of the day, thanks again to the weather, it looked as though the fans were going to be restricted to just over eight overs of play but then the weather cleared in the evening and India must have wished the rain had stuck around.

In the brief morning session, Anderson got England off to a fine start, clean bowling opener Murali Vijay for a fifth-ball duck before removing Lokesh Rahul, who was caught behind by keeper Jonny Bairstow for 8.

After a rain delay, Cheteshwar Pujara (1) was run out by debutant Ollie Pope before more rain arrived.

When play resumed, seamer Chris Woakes, brought in to replace Ben Stokes, who is at a court hearing in Bristol, got the prize wicket of India skipper Virat Kohli for 23 leaving the tourists, who trail 1-0 in the series, at 4-49.

Only off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, batting at No.8, provided any real resistance, making 29 in a 49-minute knock before he was trapped lbw by Stuart Broad.

Both teams made changes from the first Test with India opting for a twin spin bowling attack.

Bledisloe the first step as Wallabies begin to build towards World Cup

JAMIE PANDARAM

THE Wallabies need to become world rugby's benchmark, starting with reclaiming the Bledisloe Cup, skipper Michael Hooper has declared.

While ending a 15-year losing streak in the Bledisloe series to the All Blacks will give

Australian rugby a huge boost, Hooper says it will be more important to give the team the winning edge ahead of next year's World Cup.

"The confidence for next year is the thing for me, just the belief for some of the younger guys," Hooper said.

"There's a group of players

who did it last year, the ability to go back-to-back starts to put doubt in other teams' minds and you change how teams come in thinking about how you're going to play, and the perception on your back.

"That's something we haven't had for a while; the Kiwis have been out in front

and haven't had to look back for a while ... We need to start pushing into that territory."

The Wallabies will hold a fan day in Blacktown today and Hooper believes the next generation of superstars could be there to meet idols Israel Folau, Kurtley Beale and Lukhan Tuhi.

"There has been challenges with rugby out there in the Sydney comp with Penrith not being there; however, there is a great fan base out in the western Sydney area," Hooper said.

"Showing that to the kids, Tolu Latu grew up down the

road from here; even Brandon Paenga-Amosa, he goes up and plays in Queensland, there's huge opportunities for players to play and make it from those areas.

"Hopefully the kids out there can see these guys who grew up in western Sydney and now are living their dream."