

Tucker plays tight hand

From **LIONEL BEALE**

Balmain's new coach Ken Tucker played his cards unusually close to his chest regarding the Tigers' new recruits.

But **INSIDE FOOTBALL** saw them all when Balmain played North Shore recently.

Two made a big impression — forward Marty Meegan from WA and Victorian Alf Boccabella.

And besides, coach Tucker played more than a fair game himself.

He also introduced four more recruits to Sydney football.

They are Ric Evans (SA) and from Victoria: Neil Bristoe, Mark White-oak and Michael Campbell.

So it's onward and upward for the new Balmain Tigers in 1981 - that is, if they play their cards right!

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Pennant Hills is one of only three clubs in Sydney to retain their 1980

coaches for this season — Newtown and St. George are the others.

And no wonder!

Former Essendon and Yarraville player Pat Wellington has wrought magic as Pennant Hills' captain-coach.

His side finished fifth on the Sydney competition ladder and was considered unlucky not to make the final four.

The Demons have since lost Phil Tribolet, Michael Toy, Mal Farnham and Bill Perritt.

New recruits include Russell Blatchford, a rover from the Mildura area, and Andrew Norris, a half-forward from Frankston. And there's also rover Mitchell Gray from Gosford.

But the promise for Pennant Hills lies in its young players such as Terry Thripp, Stephen Edwards and David Whitting, all under-19s players who show the necessary talent for a first grade spot.

Newton coach Sam Kekovich is the third holdover coach in the SFL.

He is also the NSW state coach and selector, so a lot more than just the destiny of Newtown hangs on his shoulders and fine football brain.

The former North Melbourne dynamo is having his first stint as coach and the improvement in Newtown could see that club this season play in its first grand final in more than a decade.

New recruits include Bruce Stewart, the 1980 NSW state team captain, from The Rock in the Riverina district.

Centreman Stephen Kent from Prahran and ruck-rover Graham Pratt from Edithvale-Aspendale are more talented players to come to Newtown. Ian Broadfoot is another gain.

No, he's not a player — but nearly the best trainer in Sydney!

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North Shore's defeat of 1980 premiers East Sydney last weekend was sweet revenge for the Bears, at last.

East Sydney displayed its 1980 premiers pennant prior to the match.



N.S.W.

North Shore kicked 20.19 (139) to East Sydney's 20.17 (137) to win by just two points after a thrilling game.

Memories of its dismal grand final were blotted out as North Shore took everything that East Sydney threw at it and came back for more.

New Bears coach John Tuckwell, full back John Baker and wingers Greg Jepsen and Ken Pitcher were unbeatable all day.

Jepsen's performance stamped him the best winger in Sydney.

How the NSW selectors could drop him from the state squad is hard to understand.