

Magpies back in form

From **LIONEL BEALE**

The strength of the Sydney competition was shown once again by last weekend's results and bearing on the SFL ladder.

A month ago Western Suburbs was looking good but Pennant Hills defeated it twice in two weeks to look even better.

Then East Sydney gave North Shore a mudbath and sat on top of the ladder looking likely.

But after Sunday, the favoritism pendulum swung back to Western Suburbs.

Western Suburbs "showed what Kipling knew when East met West.

Down four goals at half time, and staring its third consecutive defeat right in the eye, the Magpies showed their pennant form to win by seven points.

The other matches in round 10 went to Pennant Hill, North Shore and Newtown.

Pennant Hills was behind Balmain all day until the last term when it kicked 8.6 to Balmain's solitary point to win by 34 points.

North Shore returned to the winning list against St. George by five goals.

Newtown had no trouble in defeating Liverpool.

That game was highlighted by an outstanding performance from NSW and Newtown full back Kent Coburn.

Coburn kicked nine goals when switched to the forward line in the second half — indeed, not a bad effort from the best full back in NSW.

After round 10, there are three teams locked in first place — East Sydney, Newtown and Pennant Hills — with North Shore and Western Suburbs equal in fourth place on the Escort premiership ladder.

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Young Mark Davis is one of Western Suburbs' players of the future.

He was born in Lockhart in the Riverina district and learnt his football while at school there.

A physical education student at Sydney University, Mark has graduated through the Magpies' under 19 side in 1979 to a regular first grade spot in 1981 at the age of 20.

Under Western Suburbs' new coach

this season, Laurie Queay, Mark has settled into the team in the centre position or on the half forward line.

Although Mark is doing well in Sydney football, he's a keen follower of Essendon in the VFL.

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Like the first cuckoo of spring, the call came last week to the Sydney Football League headquarters for tickets to this year's VFL Grand Final — ho hum.

Always at about this stage of the season it occurs, but the caller (obviously a Collingwood fan) was sadly turned away.

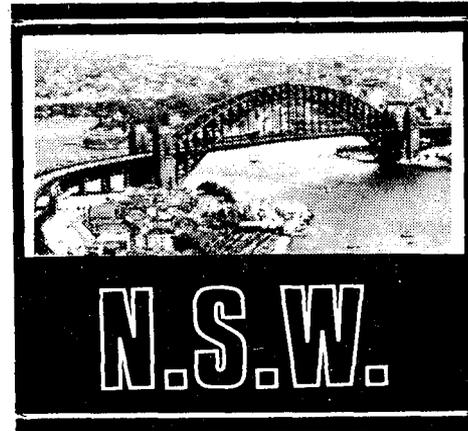
Turned away, that is, to buy tickets to the Collingwood-South Melbourne clash at the SCG on July 26.

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On the field, 21-year-old Dale Boccabella, the Balmain ruckman, is as unrelenting as you would expect a ruckman to be.

Dale was born at Tatura in Victoria and wears the yellow and black colors of Richmond for Balmain in the SFL.

Dale learned his football at Melbourne in the under 19 Reserve grades — or rather polished his game



with the Demons — and last season played with West Preston YCW.

Off the field Dale Boccabella reveals shyly another side of his character.

He is very proud of his Glebe junior club, which he coaches on Saturdays.

Boccabella's recent display when he clashed in the ruck with Newtown's John Pilkington was worth the admission money.

Dale has made a very big impression here and is probably Balmain's most eligible bachelor!

Sport is Dale's interest, and he also likes to eat out — so a girl who can cook well might just nab him, if she's a sport too!