

Draw doesn't really help anyone that much

VICTORIAN NETBALL LEAGUE

Championship Division

Geelong Cougars (45) v Hume City Falcons (49), Yarra Valley Grammar Ariels (54) v North East Blaze (54), Boroondara Genesis (49) v Monash University Central (47), VU Western Lightning (51) v Southern Saints (51), Ballarat Pride (50) v Peninsula Waves (50)

	W	L	D	%	Pts
Hume City Falcons	11	1	0	131.11	44
Southern Saints	8	3	1	121.49	34
VU Western Lightning	8	3	1	113.90	34
Monash Uni Central	8	4	0	125.57	32
Boroondara Genesis	7	5	0	113.31	28
North East Blaze	6	5	1	105.63	26
YV Grammar Ariels	4	7	1	88.93	18
Ballarat Pride	2	9	1	79.22	10
Geelong Cougars	2	10	0	71.95	8
Peninsula Waves	1	10	1	73.12	6

Next week ...

Monash University Central v North East Blaze, Peninsula Waves v VU Western Lightning, Boroondara Genesis v Geelong Cougars, Yarra Valley Grammar Ariels v Hume City Falcons, Ballarat Pride v Southern Saints (Wendouree Saturday, June 13)

VNL NETBALL

David Turner

EVEN though they both came out of Wednesday night's Championship Division clash at the State Netball Centre undefeated, a high-scoring 54-54 draw did no favours for either North-East Blaze or Yarra Valley Grammar Ariels.

Needing to win, pretty much, every game between now and the post-season, a share of the points could well have cruelled any remaining finals hopes for both teams.

"No, it didn't do us any favours," Ariels coach Christina Puopolo said.

"But, I really think my girls played a lot better (than in recent weeks). I'd been getting individual efforts out on court, this week they played as a team unit.

"We changed our style a little bit and it really worked for us."

Ariels opened a handy four-goal lead at quarter-time, 15-11, before the Blaze drew level at the half.

After Ariels edged to a one-goal lead at three-quarter-time, there was nothing separating the sides after a see-sawing final quarter.

But, Yarra Valley's run of bad luck increased by one more notch this week when goal attack Stephanie Puopolo got her hands on the ball as the siren sounded leaving her with no time to get a match-winning shot away.

Puopolo and wing attack Sarah Wall, after playing last week's match with illness, were back to their best this week.

"Steph and Sarah were both quite strong this week," Puopolo said.

"So the structure we had in attack worked a lot better for us."

With finals now unlikely, the young Ariels roster is using the remainder of the campaign to learn lessons that will form the building blocks for future seasons.

In recent weeks, Puopolo said, her inexperienced line-up has been struggling to come to grips with the physical nature of Championship Division netball, including the jostling and holding of her attackers.

Training this week was dedicated to the problem with defenders playing tight defence on attackers, including holding, in training scrimmages.

Throw-in working with football tackling bags, and the learning curve is continuing.

Every inch of real estate was vital in the circle during this week's Blaze v Ariels clash.

Picture: STEVE TANNER. s50kn999



Denson opens doors

SEABL BASKETBALL

Ben Turner

AMY Denson made the quick decision to play in Australia after a call from the Kilsyth Cobras.

Now, as her star is rising in the SEABL, more doors could start opening, in both the WNBL and Europe.

After a successful college career at Arizona State University, Denson was a two-time MVP of the Puerto Rican League before taking up opportunities in Poland and Romania.

At home in Central Point, Oregon, and planning her next move, a call came in from her agent.

The Kilsyth Cobras were after a player.

After visiting Australia during her college years, Denson had always dreamed of playing down under.

So, when the call came in, she jumped at the opportunity, getting straight on a plane bound for Melbourne.

Since arriving in Australia, Denson has taken-on some of Australia's premier players, including Natalie Porter, Cayla Francis and Emma Randall, and some of the SEABL's best in Zoe Carr, Jasmine Finnigan and Emily Fryters.

And, on most occasions, she's come out on top.

"I am really impressed with the competition. You have to get yourself up for every game, and there are no easy wins in the SEABL. The league is a lot more physical than

“You have to get yourself up for every game, and there are no easy wins in the SEABL.”

other leagues I have played in and the referees allow you to play, which is great," Denson said.

And, she has enjoyed the challenge of playing against the SEABL's elite talent.

"When you go against an Australian Opals player it brings another challenge," she said.

"I want to make my mark against these big time players."

Currently averaging 20.2 points and 10.4 rebounds a game, Denson has come onto the radar of WNBL coaches building their rosters for the coming season.

"It is a blessing taking any opportunity to play, this job has been awesome and I want to use it as a stepping stone to the WNBL or Europe," she said.

"I have aspirations to continue playing in the best leagues I can."

As for the team success:

"I don't think there is anything holding us back this year," she said.

"We need to take it one game and one possession at a time and, if we focus on the present and play in the moment, we can build the momentum required to defend our title."



Amy Denson has earned plenty of fans in her first SEABL season



Leader
SUPER COACH™

YOUNG Pat Dangerfield got his opportunity in the midfield in Denis Pagan's Round 11 *Leader Supercoach* team.

Dangerfield was given the opportunity after Eagle Daniel Kerr was suspended.

But, Pagan decided to give up on Sydney's Luke Ablett for 2009, replacing him with Brisbane Lion Michael Rischitelli.

Despite some patchy performances of late, Pagan is sticking with Hawthorn champion Lance Franklin. Franklin scored just 28 points in Round 10.

It is not too late to join *Leader Supercoach*. There are weekly prizes as well as an overall prize, so visit leadernews.com.au and follow the links.

PAGAN vs PIKE

Denis Pagan

Round 10
1878
Wins: 4

Martin Pike

Round 10
2044
Wins: 6

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KILSYTH COBRAS VS **BANDITS**

WOMEN TIP OFF 6.15pm
MEN TIP OFF 8.15pm

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MAJOR PARTNERS: ANE, workforce XS, SPALDING, Ringwood, Kilsyth

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