

Coach accentuates the positive

By ALAN APTED

Coach Adrienne Morrin is confident her Counties Manukau netball team will come good despite losing their opening four matches in the Lois Muir Challenge.

Morrin feels reassured after the team's encouraging efforts in the 59-45 loss to Western in Nelson last Sunday.

"Overall this was a much better performance by the whole team and has given us something to build on for the last two rounds," Morrin says.

"We were much better at sticking to the game-

plan using our heads under pressure and have adapted to the physical nature of the game."

Western were never threatened after taking an 18-7 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The lead blew out to 20 points by the third quarter but determined defence by goal defence Elizabeth Ene and wing attack Nadia Loveday cut the lead to 46-34.

Counties Manukau closed the gap to nine goals but a late run by Western saw them win by a 14-point margin.

Morrin says there were signs the team was improving in the 49-42

loss to Otago the day before.

It was an encouraging effort given that many of the team played in the physical and hard-fought Super 12 local derby between the Papatoetoe Rangers and Aztec Premiers 24 hours earlier.

Counties Manukau won the first quarter 12-8 but a run of six goals just before half time gave Otago the upper hand.

They led by 10 at the end of the third, a lead that Counties Manukau whittled back to seven by the final whistle.

A feature of the match was the number of op-

portunities that Counties Manukau shooters missed.

They had 64 attempts while Otago managed 61.

"That tells us we are right in there and now need to improve our shooting statistics," Morrin says.

Counties Manukau have a bye this weekend.

That gives them two weeks to prepare for their double header against Auckland/Waitakere and North at the Otara Leisure Centre on April 10. They face Auckland/Waitakere at 10am and North at 1.30pm.

It will be a big day for south Auckland netball

fans with Bay of Plenty and Waikato featuring in the four-game programme.

In Super12 action, the Papatoetoe Rangers beat Aztec 45-38 and Mellons Bay were beaten 66-38 by Phoenix, Waikato netball's No 3 seeds.

Aztec and Mellons Bay play in Otara on Friday.

Aztec face Auckland/Waitakere third seeds College Rifles in the curtainraiser at 6.30pm and Mellons Bay face Waikato champs Waikato University at 8pm.

Rangers are away to North second seeds Collegiate at AUT in Northcote at 6.30pm.

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