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June 14th 2008 www.southernsteel.co.nz

Match Report : Ascot Park Hotel Southern Steel vs Vixens - June 7, 2008 Steel 47, Vixens 46

The baby of the Southern Steel team, 18-year-old Julianna Naoupu, catapulted to star status after a match-winning performance against the highly-rated Melbourne Vixens on Saturday. With a confidence belying her youth, Naoupu earned Player of the Match and, poetically, slotted the winning shot with just seconds left on the clock to secure a upset 47-46 victory over the Australian visitors.

“She was wonderful,” Steel coach Robyn Broughton said of Naoupu. “We’re very proud of her – she didn’t show a lot of nerves, she just got on with it.”

Naoupu said she was simply making the most of the chance to shine. “Once you’re given that opportunity to go out there and play, you have to give it all you’ve got,” she said.

A top contender for the ANZ Championship crown, the star-studded Vixens were firm favourites heading into the clash – making the win even sweeter for the Southerners. “It was a pretty big one taking points off a top four team,” Broughton said.

The Ascot Park Hotel-sponsored Steel is starting to reap the rewards of a dedicated training schedule and finally mold into a formidable unit on the court. “We had to have that trust and belief today and it was there,” captain Jenny-May Coffin said.

The performance was a step up from last week’s messy 41-29 win over the Pulse, which saw the Steel throw away “40-odd” balls. “We were lucky to get away with it against the Pulse and we knew we wouldn’t get away with it against a team like this,” Coffin said.

With regular goal attack Megan Dehn forced out of the game with an ankle injury, the Steel enlisted former Sting shooter Tania Dalton as a potential replacement. But the skills of the former Silver Fern were not needed as Naoupu stepped up to the challenge, slotting 26 of her 32 attempts during the game.

It was obvious from the onset the Vixens had crossed the Tasman on a mission, contesting virtually every pass to put relentless pressure on the Steel throughout the court. The Vixens brought a pace to the game not often seen on New Zealand soil and, when it was controlled, the result was impressive. But too often speed led to mistakes and the Steel, in particular defenders Megan Hutton, Katrina Grant and Erika Burgess, were quick to pounce. Tasked with containing Australian star Sharelle McMahon and the accurate Caitlin Thwaites, Grant and Hutton put in an admirable performance.

At the other end of the court, Naoupu was well supported by Daneka Wipiiti, who at times looked to have a Siamese twin in the form of formidable goal keep Bianca Chatfield.

In the physicality stakes, the nuggety Southerners matched the toughness of its opposition, showing more “steel” than previous performances. The midcourt proved a minefield, but Coffin and centre Liana Barrett-Chase negotiated it with patience and were well supported on attack by Burgess and Grant. The third quarter introduction of Wendy Telfer at centre provided a stronger defensive style which proved crucial in the latter stages.

While the Vixens held the upper hand 15-13 after the first quarter and 24-23 at halftime, the Steel finally snatched the lead to head into the final spell up 36-34. Spurred on by the 2950-strong crowd, the Steel struck out to a 41-36 advantage but, despite instructions from Coffin to “stay focused”, it was short-lived as the Vixens clawed their way back to level 41-41 with 7 minutes remaining.

To its credit, the Steel kept its composure in the dying stages to seal a crucial win and keep its ANZ Championship hopes alive.

For Vixens coach Julie Hoornweg, the loss was hard to swallow. “A couple of crucial errors at the wrong time let them back in the game and their crowd lifted them and carried them forward,” she said. The Vixens also took a swipe at umpiring differences between the two countries and felt they were on the receiving end of a lot of whistle. “There were two teams going for the ball in most cases and for us to get double the penalties we must be doing something wrong,” Hoornweg said. “There’s certainly a different interpretation and we need to address that.”

Another trans-Tasman battle looms for the Ascot Park Hotel Southern Steel when it takes on West Coast Fever at 7pm on Monday, June 16, at the Edgar Centre in Dunedin



Take a look at the Southern Steel Photo Gallery

We've got a great selection of photographs, courtesy Southland Times, showing the Southern Steel in action against the Vixens on our Photo Gallery. [Click here](#) to take a look.

Next Game: THE CLASH OF STEEL VS FEVER IS LIVE ON SKY SPORT AT 7.00PM ON MONDAY 16 JUNE

STOP PRESS

A temporary replacement player has been granted for Ascot Park Hotel Southern Steel for Round 11 on medical grounds.

After sustaining an injury rolling her ankle in the May 31st game against the Suzuki Pulse, Megan Dehn is replaced by former Southern Sting shooter and former Silver Fern **Tania Dalton**. This is for the Round 11 game between Steel and Fever in Dunedin on Monday June 16 only.



You're in with a chance to **WIN** a great Southern Steel Supporters T-shirt.

We'll be making a prize draw after Monday night's game against the Fever from all the subscribers to this email newsletter, to win a great Southern Steel Supporters T-Shirt. Your name is on the list, so it could be you! **Good Luck**

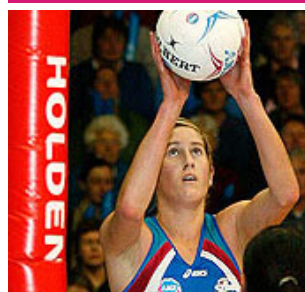
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Show Your Support. Get behind **YOUR TEAM** and enjoy the sheer excitement of a **Home Game**.

Great seats are still available for the following Home Games:

Monday 16 June vs West Coast Fever at Edgar Centre - 7.00 pm

Monday 30 June vs Magic at Stadium Southland - 7.00 pm



Sunday 6 July vs Queensland Firebirds at Edgar Centre - 5.30 pm

Tickets can be purchased from the Southern Steel booking offices at:
**Stadium Southland in Invercargill - Phone 03 217 1200 and the
Edgar Centre in Dunedin - Phone 03 456 1200**

THE 2008 ASCOT PARK HOTEL SOUTHERN STEEL

Megan Dehn	Jerry-May Coffin	Megan Hulton	Jess Tuki	Juliana Naoupu	Deneka Wipahi	Liana Barrett-Chase	Wendy Teller	Erika Burgess	Debbie White	Te Huinga Reo Selby-Fickit	Katrina Grant

[CLICK FOR TEAM PROFILES](#)

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