



Steel topped by Mystics

Ascot Park Hotel Southern Steel 34, LG Northern Mystics 51
By Kate Buchanan

Tania Dalton has never been one to mince her words so her “ugly” analysis of this weeks clash between the Ascot Park Hotel Southern Steel and the LG Northern Mystics comes as no surprise.

“It certainly wasn’t a flash game from either team ... it was high turnover and pretty reckless,” she said. “I really hate losing.”

Ravaged by injuries to key personnel in each third of the court – midcourter Natasha Chokljat, shooter Daneka Wipiiti and defender Sheryl Scanlan – the Steel were always facing a tough assignment against the Silver Fern-laden Mystics but refused to use it as an excuse for the 17-goal drubbing.

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Steel a Secret from ... Wendy Frew

Enduring a six month injury-forced hiatus from the game she loves was a tough ask for Southern Steel co-captain Wendy Frew.

Off-season shoulder surgery in July proved more intrusive than specialists initially anticipated and recovery was hampered when Frew developed a “frozen shoulder”.

Stepping onto the court at Steel’s preseason tournament in January was the culmination of an intense rehabilitation process – and being declared fit to play in the opening match of Steel’s 2011 campaign was “awesome”.

“It was a pretty tough six and a half months ... it’s been challenging times but I think it’s made me a stronger person and more determined to get out there and play,” Frew said.

“While it felt a bit rusty and there’s certainly room for improvement, I really enjoyed getting back out there.”

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Aussie Rules OK:

Southern Steel midcourter Natasha Chokljat with St Kilda AFL team members Nick Riewoldt (left) and Lenny Hayes in Queenstown recently.

Chokljat told Southland Times netball reporter Brendon Egan she reckons her team-mates might have to brush up on their Aussie Rules knowledge before they head to Melbourne in April.

The Saints used Queenstown as a training base in January to prepare for their coming campaign and crossed paths with our Steel players, who were in town for their annual preseason tournament – although a few confessed to



initially wondering which rugby team they were from. AFL buff Chokljat set the record straight, however, and used the opportunity to catch up with old mates and St Kilda stars Riewoldt and Hayes. Chokljat became a Saints supporter when she shifted to Melbourne from Canberra in 1998 because her Phoenix Commonwealth Bank Trophy side trained with the AFL powerhouse. She admitted to later jumping on the Geelong Cats bandwagon.



The AFL has a special place in Chokljat's heart after spending the last four years working in the finance department of the AFL's headquarters in Docklands.

Australian Rules is like a religion in the Victorian capital with teams enjoying fanatical support and stadiums frequently packed out. She hoped to take Steel's squad to a game in April when they head to Melbourne to play the Vixens.

The nippy midcourter has shifted to Invercargill with rugby-playing partner James Lew to play for Steel and said she had made a smooth transition to life in the deep south.

"I've fitted into the lifestyle quite easily. It's nice and laidback. I'm loving the five minutes to get everywhere."

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