

Wright urges Magpies to adjust to loss of Madi

DARREN SNOWDON

COLLINGWOOD Magpies coach Rob Wright is determined to keep his troops moving in a positive direction as they adjust to life without co-captain Madi Browne.

After an impressive opening-round victory against two-

time defending champions Sunshine Coast Lightning, the Magpies followed up a tough draw against the Firebirds in Brisbane with a disappointing loss to the Giants.

But Collingwood played with more conviction as they swept aside the struggling Adelaide Thunderbirds by 18

goals at Melbourne Arena, displaying the impressive speed and slick ball movement that saw them installed as legitimate championship contenders.

While Wright praised his players for the manner in which they bounced back from last week's disappointment, he

feels they are still coming to terms with the loss of Browne after the experienced mid-courter suffered a season-ending ACL injury in the pre-season.

Wright described Browne's injury as a massive loss for the club. "I think it just changed our plans quite a bit so we're

still trying to tinker with that," Wright said after Friday's 65-47 victory over Adelaide. "(Tonight was) a step forward ... still not quite where I think we need to be but we're getting there."

Wright noted that Jamaican goaler Shimona Nelson continues to improve every week,

adding 52 goals against Adelaide despite the close attention of countrywoman Shamera Sterling.

Wright wasted little time in shifting his focus towards next Saturday's home clash against West Coast Fever to be played at the recently-renovated Bendigo Stadium.



Milwaukee superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo dunks the ball over Toronto's Pascal Siakam

Picture: STACY REVERE/GETTY IMAGES

Antetokounmpo sets high tone for Raptors

THE Milwaukee Bucks never trailed on the way to a 125-103 victory over the Toronto Raptors and a 2-0 lead in the East finals.

Giannis Antetokounmpo started the game with an emphatic dunk. The next possession, a sprawling block to deny Marc Gasol. The next possession, another dunk.

The tone was set. And it never changed.

The Eastern Conference doesn't belong to Antetokounmpo and the Bucks yet. But they're two wins away, after Antetokounmpo had 30 points and 17 rebounds, while Ersan Ilyasova came off the bench to add 17 points.

"He plays so hard, he lays it

all on the line, every time," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said.

Antetokounmpo scored 11 points in the fourth for the Bucks, who ended up with six players in double figures — three of them reserves.

Nikola Mirotic scored 15, Malcolm Brogdon had 14, George Hill 13 and Khris

Middleton 12. Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points for Toronto, a side which gave up the game's first nine points, never led and trailed by double digits for the final 39 minutes.

"We didn't do much well tonight, obviously," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said. Game 3 is tomorrow morning (NT time) in Toronto.

Aiken's call to 'Purple Army'

GREG DAVIS

BE brave, be bold.

That was the advice from Firebirds coach Roselee Jencke when she swung superstar goals shooter Romelda Aiken into defence in a shock positional shake-up last Sunday.

And Aiken wants Queensland to embrace the same fearless philosophy when they host the GWS Giants in a must-win Suncorp Super Netball clash today.

The Firebirds will welcome back captain Gabi Simpson (groin) who passed a fitness test yesterday but will be without defender Kim Jenner (broken finger) for the match-up at the Queensland State Netball Centre.

Aiken said the Firebirds squad had to be versatile and be prepared for anything in searching for their first win of the 2019 campaign to climb out of seventh place on the ladder.

"We've got to win. That's the bottom line," she said.

"We've got to do whatever it takes to win and if that means we make 50,000 changes, we'll do it.

"We have to be adaptable. We have to be brave and be bold and enjoy the different experiences out there."

Aiken's foray into the goalkeeper position for the second

half of last weekend's "Battle of the Bruce" loss to the Sunshine Coast was not that foreign to the prolific Jamaican sharpshooter.

The key defensive post was the first position she played in netball and where she first debuted for her country.

"I've played a few games there before. I was a defender and my sister was the shooter," Aiken said.

"It's where I was picked for Jamaica so it's not that new.

"When Rose (Jencke) said we were going to be brave and be bold and try something different, I was like, 'OK'."

When asked if she would be returning to the GS bib for the start of today's outing against the Giants, Aiken responded: "I enjoyed the opportunity to play somewhere else but it's (goal shooter) where I've made my name so we'll see what happens."

Aiken said the crowd at Nathan for the last home game against Collingwood gave the Firebirds a significant lift in the dying stages when they forced a draw and was hoping the "Purple Army" bring their voice again.

"We can't wait to see how loud they are this time around. Against the Magpies it was so loud," she said.

"It made you stop and think, 'wow, this is our crowd'."

Lightning surge late to hand Swifts first defeat of season

THE NSW Swifts have suffered their first defeat of the 2019 Super Netball season at the hands of the resilient Sunshine Coast Lightning 59-57, at the Quaycentre yesterday.

The hosts looked the dominant side for long periods of the contest but failed to capitalise on some late chances, allowing the visitors back into

the game with some costly turnovers and errors.

The Swifts took a 32-31 lead into the halftime break in what was a very hard-fought first half, and both sides were bringing plenty of physicality onto the court as they jockeyed for second spot on the competition ladder.

Sam Wallace (33/36) and

Helen Housby (24/26) continued to show their chemistry up front, but it was the Lightning's Peace Proscovia who was shining the brightest with 25 points before halftime, making life extremely tough for the home team's defence.

The Swifts rallied after the break and raced out to an eight-point lead during the

third quarter, however the injection of Cara Koenen sparked a comeback for the visitors and turned what was looking to be a comfortable lead into a war of attrition once again.

Koenen scored 18 points in her cameo and put her side on the front foot, allowing them to overcome a fairly heavy deficit

in a really strong come-from-behind win on the road.

The NSW Swifts will travel interstate next weekend to take on the high-flying Melbourne Vixens in a blockbuster clash.

Peace Proscovia of the Lightning fights for the ball

Picture: CRAIG GOLDING/AAP IMAGE

