

Hill Top wins two titles

Southern Highland News

Goalkeeper's shootout heroics helps club to first and third division success

FRED MCKIE

Reserve goalkeeper Brett Peckham held his nerve in a tense penalty shootout - his second of the day - as never-say-die Hill Top overcame a bruising encounter to lift the Highlands Soccer Association men's first division premiership at Yerrinbool on Saturday.

After coming out on top in the division three shootout as Hill Top triumphed in the season finale, Peckham was thrust into the spotlight again against Patris after the club's first-choice goalie Jason Bardsley was red-carded for a professional foul in the early stages of the often-heated top grade grand final.

With the score level at 1-1 after 90 minutes and both sides failing to find the golden goal in extra time the pressure was on Peckham to repeat his earlier heroic efforts - and he came up trumps.

The weight on Peckham's shoulders was increased when team mate Andy Mikhail lifted the ball over the crossbar at the start of the shootout and Patris went one goal up.

Hearts were aflutter when Zac Connolly's shot was then blocked but he was given a second chance and made no mistake after the referee ruled Patris keeper John Mihalidis had moved off his line before the kick.

Steve Seeley, Steve Johnson

Hill Top	1
Patris	1

and Dean Felber all found the back of the net for Hill Top before Brett Mihalidis wasted an opportunity to seal victory for Patris when he sent his potential winner several metres too high to leave the shootout levelled at four-all.

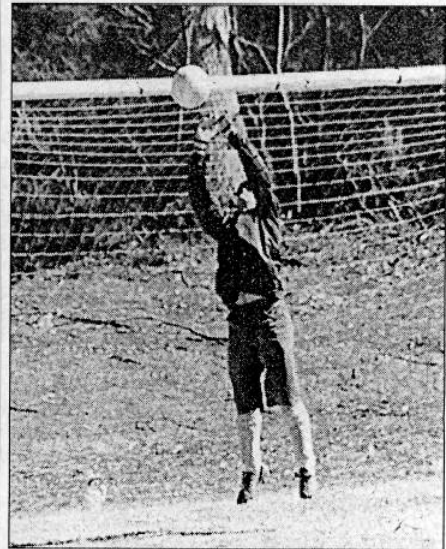
Nathan Murray hit the target with the next kick then Peckham had to recompose himself after victory celebrations kicked off prematurely following his block of the next Patris shot - before players and fans alike realised the ref's whistle had blown for an infringement.

After Adam Knight and Mick Allen took Hill Top's shootout tally to seven, though, Peckham sealed the win with another blocked shot.

Earlier Felber gave the victors a first half lead before Bardsley was sent off for the first time in his career.

Simon Roberts equalised for Patris when he sent a spot kick past Hill Top captain Trent Humberstone who briefly moved into goal ahead of Peckham's call off the bench.

Despite being camped in their own half for much of the second stanza and losing three key players to injury - sweeper Humberstone, striker Wayne



GRAND FINAL HERO: Hill Top goal keeper Brett Peckham saved the day for his club in both the first and third division deciders.

Johnson and midfielder Paul Seeley, who was conveyed to hospital with a suspected broken wrist - Hill Top battled tirelessly and showed enormous spirit.

"Both teams played hard and I'm really proud of the boys for sticking at it," said an emotional Humberstone after the match.

"I always knew we could win with 10 men, though after they scored the penalty we obviously had to just try to hold on."

Full of praise for Peckham, he added: "Brett had a blinder. To win the penalty shootout in the third division grand final and then follow up with his performance in this game it was an excellent effort."

HILL TOP 1 (Dean Felber) drew with **PATRIS 1** (Simon Roberts). **Hill Top won 7-6 on penalties.**

Hill Top takes out third grade title

In division three Hill Top captain Glenn Hoad led his team back into contention with two goals in the final five minutes of normal time to deny Highland Rovers what had appeared to be a certain victory.

Rovers led 1-0 at half-time thanks to a strike from Gary Peters and when Ryan Winley added a second 15 minutes into the final period the side seemed

destined to win the premiership.

Then fullback Hoad, who pushed himself up front in desperation, slotted in a rebound and headed home a corner four minutes later - with only a matter of seconds left on the clock.

The golden goal eluded both teams in extra time before Hill Top won the penalty shootout

5-3 with goalkeeper Brett Peckham making a vital save.

Hoad, who was still in a state of disbelief, commented after the match: "I haven't scored in 20 years!"

HILL TOP 2 (Glenn Hoad 2) drew with **HIGHLAND ROVERS 2** (Gary Peters, Ryan Winley) Hill Top wins 5-3 on penalties.