

Hurt Lions stars in doubt

GREG DAVIS

BRISBANE midfield stars Tom Rockliff and Daniel Rich are racing against the clock to be fit for a shot at redemption.

Rockliff (calf) and Rich (hamstring) are considered touch-and-go prospects for Sunday's clash in Geelong.

Rockliff (10 possessions) and Rich (seven) had below-par returns by their lofty standards and were forced to sit out the final quarter of Saturday night's 34-point loss to North

Melbourne. They were both still sore and sorry yesterday and will have scans today to assess the damage.

"Given we have an eight-day break before Geelong it gives me half a chance to get up," said Rockliff, who received a painkilling injection yesterday.

"Hopefully it can settle down pretty quickly and I'll be right to go. I did the calf early in the game and it lingered but I'll do everything I can to be right."

Lions coach Justin Leppitsch lamented the "perfect storm" that saw most of his leaders well down, including vice-captain Daniel Merrett who gave away four free kicks. Merrett may come under the microscope of the MRP for clumsy high contact on Kangaroos forward Jarrad Waite.

Rockliff, who took an arm injury into the match, said the buck stopped with the Lions' senior core.

"The leaders didn't grab hold of the game when it was

there to be won and North got the momentum. We needed to stand up and wrestle that momentum back," he said.

"With such a young group, it is up to us to take control of the game."

Despite a number of costly turnovers and poor kicking at goal, Rockliff said the Lions could not afford to get frustrated with themselves.

"The focus has to stay on the continued development of the group. There are always going to be errors with a young

group but the effort was there," he said. "We've played two very good, mature teams in the first two weeks and we face another one in Geelong."

"If we had been 7.6 instead of 2.11 against North Melbourne it may have been a different story. It would have put them under pressure and they may have dropped their bundle."

"But they capitalised on us missing a few shots and went down the other end and kicked a few. It was a little deflating but the young boys kept fight-

ing out the game which is a real positive."

Mitch Robinson is an outside chance to return from the calf tear that kept him out of the Kangaroos match.

First-year midfielder Ben Keays is a possibility to make his AFL debut if Rockliff, Rich and/or Robinson are not available after racking up 39 disposals in the NEAFL on Saturday.

Jaden McGrath and Nick Robertson were the other standouts for the Lions reserves.



BROTHERS IN ARMS: David Mundy speaks to the Dockers played before the start on Saturday night's game against Gold Coast.

Picture: GETTY IMAGES

Defence just as sexy for Bulldogs

THE sexy, attacking Bulldogs might get the headlines but it's the defensive Dogs that are pleasing coach Luke Beveridge the most.

The Western Bulldogs defeated St Kilda by 57 points on Saturday night to make it two wins from two starts while restricting their opposition to just five goals for the second week running.

It's a feat they only managed once all last season and it makes this year's Dogs a much more dangerous prospect.

"To get that margin mainly because of the defensive element is something that we're trying to establish consistently," Beveridge said.

"We felt at various times last year that maybe let us down but we have put some mechanisms in place to help us there and it's working OK at the moment."

"That's not to say that at different times we won't move away from that but two quality sides in Fremantle and the Saints ... that's a great team defensive performance."

The Bulldogs led by 25 points at half-time at Etihad Stadium and restricted St Kilda to just two goals in the second half on their way to the 13.15 (93) to 5.6 (36) win.

Beveridge's team famously gave up a 55-point lead to lose to the Saints at the same venue in round six last season and he was pleased with the clinical manner his players ensured history didn't repeat.

The performance came after a week of plaudits in the media for the attacking style in their 65-point demolition of the Dockers, which Beveridge said was part of becoming a premiership contender.

"I wasn't worried but you do have to process it and at some point address it," he said of the rave reviews of their season-opening win.

"The players play to live those weeks where they're getting some credit and they can enjoy a victory, so you never want to take that away from them."

'Rude awakening' has Lyon pondering tactics

JUSTIN CHADWICK

FREMANTLE coach Ross Lyon is confident he can dig his side out of its early-season rut, but admits he might need to throw their new centre-square tactics out the window.

The Dockers are struggling at 0-2 after following up their 65-point loss to the Western Bulldogs with a shock 26-point defeat to Gold Coast in Perth on Saturday.

Fremantle's decision to implement a more attacking centre-square set-up has backfired badly in the opening two rounds.

The Suns were able to kick six goals from centre-square stoppages - a stat that clearly alarmed Lyon.

"It hurt us early last week and its clearly hurt us again," Lyon said.

"We've chosen to go a certain way out of the middle -

structure up that has certainly left our backline exposed and not coping, and our mids not coping. So we certainly have to look at that. It's a bit of a rude awakening."

The Dockers face tough matches against West Coast and North Melbourne in the next two weeks, putting them in danger of slipping to 0-4 less than a year after winning the minor premiership. But Lyon isn't panicking just yet.

"It's not my job to execute people. That's not what I'm about," Lyon said.

"I'm about possibility, creating opportunity."

"We're 0-2. I've been in bigger holes than this. We'll work through. We won't be intimidated into to what other people think. That's not the way we roll."

The Suns are riding high after posting impressive wins over Essendon and Fremantle.

And with games against strugglers Carlton and Brisbane to come in the next fortnight, Gold Coast has an excellent chance to improve its record to 4-0.

But coach Rodney Eade isn't getting carried away just yet, especially after watching his side become decimated by injuries last year.

"We have to be mindful now that we don't get comfortable," Eade said.