

Duncan back in running to face Lions

JASON PHELAN
AFL

GEELONG midfielder Mitch Duncan is recovering well after being knocked out in the Cats' surprise loss to Greater Western Sydney and should be fit to play Brisbane this weekend.

Duncan left the field dazed in the third quarter at Manuka Oval in Canberra after coming off second best in a bone-jarring collision with Giants ruckman Shane Mumford.

"He's really good, he obviously wasn't good enough to keep going which did speak to a bit of an issue there, but he's recovered really well," coach Chris Scott said yesterday.

"We're a long way away from finalising our team but the indications are positive at the moment."

Duncan, Daniel Menzel, Nakia Cockatoo – who has served a two-match suspension – and upgraded rookie defender Tom Ruggles are all in the selection mix for Sunday's

clash against the Lions at Simonds Stadium.

Scott said the Cats weren't spooked after Sunday's defeat but admitted there were some startling figures to come out of the match.

A week after superstar recruit Patrick Dangerfield led the Cats to an eye-catching win over reigning premiers Hawthorn, Scott's side came back to earth with a thud against the Giants in Canberra.

The final stats sheet made for grim reading for Scott,

whose side were outpointed in a host of critical areas including clearances, contested possession, inside 50s and tackles.

"Six days prior (against the Hawks) it wasn't (an issue) so we're not jumping at shadows," Scott said.

"The contested ball numbers were a bit inflated by the free kicks against ... so it looks a bit different if you strip those out.

"But there are some clear things that we need to improve on."



RECOVERING POSITION:
Midfielder Mitch Duncan.

Wingard to miss match

BRILLIANT Port Adelaide forward Chad Wingard will miss tomorrow night's AFL fixture against Essendon because of a hamstring strain.

And midfielder Hamish Hartlett (hamstring) and spearhead Jay Schulz (back) will be sidelined again because of their injuries, Port coach Ken Hinkley says.

Wingard limped off late in Port's loss to Adelaide last weekend and Hinkley says scans showed a need to be cautious to prevent a more serious injury, and they would be.

"We have scanned Chad yesterday because he still had some (hamstring) awareness, so we're a bit mindful of that," Hinkley said yesterday.

"As much as we'd love him and need him to be out there this week, we have got to take the long-term view."

Hinkley hoped Wingard would be available next week, likewise Hartlett, who missed the defeat to the Crows.

"Hartlett is probably on track to play next week, no problems," he said.

But the prognosis on key forward Schulz, who was sidelined last week by a back injury, was more uncertain.

"His will be a little more wait and see how he goes over the weekend. He will run Saturday and see where he's at," Hinkley said. "We are dealing with a significant back issue with Jay but normally they settle down pretty quickly."

Suns will turn heat on Blues' defence



SHINING ON: Tom Lynch of the Suns celebrates after scoring a goal during the round two AFL match between the Fremantle Dockers and the Gold Coast Suns at Domain Stadium in Perth last weekend. Carlton await on Saturday night.

Picture: WILL RUSSELL/AFL MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES

LAUREN WOOD
AFL

THERE'S no rest for Carlton's defenders, with coach Brendon Bolton admitting the heat of a dominant Suns forward outfit poses a stern test on Saturday night.

Top draft pick Jacob Weir has had a brutal initiation to AFL, facing the likes of Coleman medallists Jack Riewoldt and Lance Franklin in the first two rounds of the season, and has the likes of

Tom Lynch – who booted six goals last week – Jack Martin and Aaron Hall awaiting this week. It had been quite a lesson, Bolton said, but he believed the 18-year-old was holding his own.

"Every week the backs would say it's a big job, because there's dangerous forwards in the competition," he said.

"We know (Lynch) is a terrific young fellow, can mark the ball and has got good leadership as well.

"The fence moves now, and

you get a chance on different players, but if (Weir) gets a chance on him, it will be a good learning experience for him.

"He's holding his own and doing quite well."

The Blues are still hunting their first win of the season, and he is not only tasked with stopping the trio, but two-time Brownlow medallist Gary Ablett in the centre.

Bolton said he was yet to finalise plans for negating him, admitting he does not believe

the role of the tagger to be dead in today's game.

But he is calling for improvement from his entire mid-field group, particularly from centre bounces after a disappointing showing in that area against Sydney last Sunday.

"(The Suns) were really special (against Fremantle) in the centre bounce," Bolton said.

"We'll train it today. We've got some quality inside mids there that can hold their own.

"We think it's an area we can improve on really quickly."

Bennell out for a month

PRIZED Fremantle recruit Harley Bennell is set to miss at least another month of AFL action as the Dockers search far and wide to find a permanent fix for his calf issues.

Bennell was "haunted" by calf tweaks during his time at Gold Coast, and the issue has already flared up twice since his switch to Fremantle at the end of last season.

The 23-year-old is currently grounded after injuring his calf last month, and Dockers coach Ross Lyon confirmed he wouldn't be available for selection for at least four weeks.

And if Fremantle decide Bennell needs to undergo another extensive rehabilitation program to strengthen his calves – as he did over summer – the 23-year-old might not return until midway through the season.

Lyon said the Dockers would do everything within their power to ensure the calf issue didn't continue to hamper Bennell.

Fremantle have even consulted Craig Purdam – the head of physical therapies at the AIS – and other leading experts around the country for help with the issue.

The Dockers are desperate for Bennell to return after slumping to a 0-2 start to the season.

Their lack of leg speed was brutally exposed in losses to the Bulldogs and Suns, but Lyon insisted he wouldn't rush back the fleet-footed midfielder.

HOT SUNS

2016 LEADING GOALKICKERS

Tom Lynch

2016 games: 2

AFL games: 82

2016 goals: 9

AFL goals: 133

Jack Martin

2016 games: 2

AFL games: 25

2016 goals: 6

AFL goals: 27

