

SUNDAY NEWS

Sunday News holds a special place on the New Zealand soccer media spectrum for me. That's because as far as I can tell they are responsible for the best reporting cock-up of modern times.

I have a clipping from their issue of January 26 1997, in which Dylan Cleaver -- in an article headlined **"Central confident of win"** -- writes: *"Central United coach Ricki Herbert is confident about today's game against Suburbs after last week's 1-0 win at Mt Maunganui..."*

Standard press preview bump, surely? No. Sadly a glance at the Sunday Star Times from the same day reveals the horrible truth... *"Colin Tuua continued Nelson Suburbs' winning run in the Smokefree national soccer league at Kiwitea Street, Auckland, last night, his 74th minute goal earning the visitor a 2-1 victory over Central United."*

There you have it. Not only was the match played the day before, but Nelson Suburbs won 2-1, making a double nonsense of the story.

It doesn't get any worse than that in soccer coverage from a national newspaper. Or so I thought until it came to Sunday News' coverage of the national league final (September 8) this year and the Chatham Cup final a week later.

In short, Sunday News totally ignored the national league final, despite it being televised live on terrestrial television, and managed only to squeeze some

details in 6pt print in their scoreboard page for the following week.

I was so astonished by this omission I made inquiries. Folk close to the action at News Media in Auckland suggested it was no oversight, but deliberate editorial policy.

In the circumstances there was only one thing to do. I asked Sunday News editor Clive Nelson for an explanation (at the time I thought the Chatham Cup final had also been overlooked as well -- carelessly failing to read the 6pt print).

Discounting a couple of folksy lines about him managing their 6-a-side team, the Paper Boys, here's Nelson's reply...

Thanks for your email about our reporting of the Chatham Cup and National League finals.

You make a good point about our coverage of the National Finals in Sunday News of September 9 2001.

We stuffed up and there wasn't any. There had been confusion in the office over whether a match report would appear on our Scoreboard page (p45) or elsewhere in the sports section. In the end, the report was "spiked".

That was dumb and a serious omission. But your comments on our Chatham Cup coverage in Sunday News of September 16 2001 leave me a bit bewildered. We did cover the match - staff sports writer Simon Winter was there. He hung around long enough after the match



Ron Anorak

to interview Central coach Paul Marshall and Mt Wellington scorer Heath McCormack then raced back to the office enthusing about a "wonderful game". His report appeared on p55 (the inside back page) next to Miles Davis's column about the Kingz. There may be some confusion because Winter's copy moved in later editions of the paper from p55 to the Scoreboard page (p45) to make way for our coverage of the late NRL final in Sydney (Broncos v Dragons).

In an ideal world we would have placed the NRL coverage on another page, leaving the soccer report in its logical place next to Davis's column. But we were restricted in the number of late page changes we were able to make in sport because we were continually revising our news coverage following the New York and Washington terrorist attacks.

I believe Sunday News is generally pretty good on soccer. Until our stuff-up, our coverage of the National League has been at least equal to that of any other daily or weekly paper.

And we're generally way ahead of our rivals in coverage of the Kingz.

In the latest issue (in addition to the Chatham Cup report) we had a brief back page story on Kingz runaways Vas Kalogeracos and Con Boutsianis, Miles Davis's column on Chris Turner, two inside page stories on the Kingz and stories on our Scoreboard page on Man City signing Ali Benarbia from Paris St Germain, Richard Gough (ex-Rangers, Spurs and Everton) signing for Northern Spirit in the NSL, a story on FA charges

against Danny Mills and Lee Bowyer, an update on the PFA pay dispute in England, scores from first, second and third division matches in England and match reports from Iran v Bahrain and Oman v UAE in an Asian World Cup qualifier.

All this for \$1.20. Clive Nelson, Editor, Sunday News.

I couldn't help but chuckle about Sunday News being "generally way ahead" in breaking stories on the Kingz. In fact they are weeks behind the news found on websites, mailing lists and Aussie press, but what bemused me more was on the same day that they failed to acknowledge even the score of the national league final, they found room for a 153-word article on the Kingz signing of Vinko Buljabasic which was not much different from their story of a week earlier.

Here's their story from September 2: *"The Football Kingz are targeting former Perth Glory defender Vinko Buljabasic. Assistant coach Shane Rufer told Sunday News Buljabasic, who is training with South Melbourne, was one of a number of players the Kingz were looking at to fill the final two spots of their 18-man roster..."*

Now here's the intro to their story a week later when they ignored the final... *"The Football Kingz are poised to sign another player. Vinko Buljabasic, a former Perth Glory defender and NSL championship winner with the Melbourne Knights, is set to become their 18th signing next week."*

All this for \$1.20, indeed.

Talking bollocks

2:00am Soccer: Scottish Premier League. Argentina vs Australia LIVE

-- Evening Post TV listings, Sunday August 26, Sky Sport