

CLASSY GOULBURN FAVORITES

Vikings will face a stronger Goulburn side than the one which beat them two weeks ago when they line up for today's Illawarra rugby union major semi-final at Vikings Rugby Field.

Unlike the Goulburn sides which played during the 22-round competition, today's line-up is the best the Tablelands club can field — and that could be ominous for the Blues.

Goulburn boast many class players and because of the higher representative honors these players achieved during the season, the club has paid the penalty during the season.

Without Paul Southwell, the State reserve centre, and former Illawarra half-back Tim Lyttle, Goulburn scored a conclusive 15-9 win against Vikings on August 29.

Despite the closeness of

the scores, the win was achieved with a three-try-to-nil advantage and had winger Gary Brims been more on line with his goal-kicking, the margin would have been wider.

Both Southwell and Lyttle are back today, allowing other players like Vince Fester and Mark Coleman to return to their normal backline positions.

Fester goes back to five-eighth after substituting for Lyttle and Coleman moves out one place to inside centre.

Mark Picman, usually a centre, will play on the wing and is a very fast man off the mark.

Goulburn coach Ken Player is confident Goulburn will toss minor premiers Vikings today and advance to their first Illawarra grand final.

This would mean Vikings would meet the winner of tomorrow's Shoalhaven Rugby Park minor semi-final between Teachers-Uni and Kiama in next Saturday's final, also at Vikings Rugby Field.

Vikings have made one change to the side which beat Bowral 26-3 in last Saturday's final round match.

Ron Lawson, noted for his line-out jumping,

By
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Nowra will host its first Illawarra rugby union semi-final tomorrow when Kiama and Teachers-Uni clash at Shoalhaven Rugby Park, South Nowra. To find the ground travel through Nowra on the Princes Highway, and turn right into Flinders Rd at South Nowra. Then turn right into Rugby Rd. Shoalhaven club officials will signpost the Flinders Rd turn-off.

comes back into the side at the expense of second rower Dave Cavenagh, a regular Illawarra representative this season.

Vikings coach Bill Eddy has drilled his side hard since their loss to Goulburn and expects an improved showing today, especially in backline defence.

Whereas the forwards

were fairly evenly matched in their last clash, Goulburn always looked dangerous when they spun the ball wide.

This was how they sealed the game about three minutes from the end, after Vikings had been attacking on the Goulburn 22m line with the score 11-9.

Suddenly Goulburn took

a vital maul and quick hands saw the ball race to winger John Zygadle, who touched down in the far corner after a 75-metre movement.

For tomorrow's minor semi in Nowra, Kiama coach Graham Fredericks has retained the side which beat Teachers-Uni 10-0 last Saturday.

Fredericks has the disadvantage of not having seen the game, as his wife was having their first child in Sydney.

Fredericks' Teachers-Uni counterpart John Patterson has had one change forced on him — with winger Brad Sewell replacing Ken Wright, who broke his arm against Kiama in the second half of last week's encounter.

In the minor grade

major semi-finals today, Vikings take on Goulburn in second grade and meet Waratahs in third grade.

The lower grade minor semi-finals see Shoalhaven pitted against Bowral in second grade and Dapto to play Bowral in third grade.

Vikings finished minor premiers in all three grades.

Meantime, The Mercury-sponsored Player of the Year and Most Consistent Player awards will be announced at next Saturday night's Illawarra referees' annual dinner.

The referees for the three grand finals, to be played at Dapto Showground on Saturday, September 26, also will be announced at the function.