

Cities cling to lead as rivalry turns ugly

By **DOUG GILLET**

HOCKEY: Cities have broken a decade-long drought to claim the Premier League Competition in a nail-biting battle with Granville Tigers.

Cities waged an admirable second-half fight back to snatch victory from the Tigers 5-4 in what was a heated encounter.

The victory is another notch in the belt of seasoned Cities' campaigner and current player-coach Michael Callaghan.

Callaghan has played in the side in its last successful Premier League campaign in 2000 and said yesterday's win was long overdue.

"We've worked hard for this and after losing in the grand final last year the guys really wanted it," he said.

Cities came out all guns blazing from the onset with fullback Josh Dick getting the ball rolling with a goal in the opening stages of the first half.

A lull in intensity towards the end of the first half resulted in three goals for Granville leaving the scoreboard set at 3-2 at half-time.

After a rousing address from Callaghan, a re-invigorated Cities side regained control.

The tried-and-tested forward combination of Josh Stacey, Joel Latham and Jerry Burt was used to full effect with the trio clearly dominating.

Constant pressure on the Granville fullback forced numerous turnovers and allowed Cities players to control the ball in their

attacking half.

In a starring role, Jerry Burt smashed home two goals to establish a 4-3 lead for Cities.

A cracking shot by left-inner Murray Wenzel found the back of the net and put the team on course to victory.

Granville converted a penalty goal with two minutes left, but failed to find a second goal and stay in the game.

Ill-discipline from Granville Tigers sparked a brawl in the final

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moments, in what was an ugly end to the Premier League grand final.

Callaghan said his side had reaped its just desserts after suffering a heart-breaking defeat at the hands of Granville in the grand final last year.

"There's a bit of a rivalry there and beating them after losing last year just makes it all the sweeter," he said.

"We're all pretty happy at the moment," he said last night.

Callaghan said without a collective second-half effort the game could have easily been snatched away by the Tigers.

"We played with constant attacking force and put a lot of pressure on their defence which showed up on the score board," he said.



Murray Wenzel and his Cities team-mates are celebrating their Premier League championship.