

Title hopes knocked off rails

HYDE are prepared to fight like the Tigers they are to bring the UniBond title to Ewen Fields but, after Saturday's shocker, it is surely an impossible dream.

Injuries and suspensions have ravaged Mike McKenzie's team, and ruined what were realistic championship hopes.

The facts speak for themselves. One point from a possible nine in the last three matches will win nothing. Leek have done Hyde a favour by taking three points from a possible 18, but the weakened Tigers have been unable to take advantage.

On Saturday, they were without five recognised first-teamers: Billy Garton, Dave Nolan, Ged Kimmins and Val Owen, joining Martin Jones on the sideline.

Against a team of Blyth's calibre it told, although the score somewhat flattered the Geordies.

Hyde United.....	0
Blyth Spartans.....	2

by **DAVID JONES**

The absences meant Hyde lacked cohesion - so much so that John Burrige had one a few saves to make.

Early on though, a Tigers victory looked a distinct possibility. Stephen McGargle hooked a Tony Carroll effort off the line after only five minutes, and Carroll then wasted a golden opportunity by heading a Steve Jones cross over, from less than five yards.

Disaster, however, was just around the corner. With 16 minutes gone, Mark Todd raced down the right, and pumped over a cross that Damien Atkinson headed past Ademola Bankole.

Ten minutes later, Hyde had a great chance to

draw level, when Lutel James' shot cannoned off Burrige's legs. Unfortunately, Jason Donnelly blasted over the bar.

Jones was giving Blyth problems galore on the right and, on the stroke of half time, he powered in a shot that Burrige was happy to scramble for a corner.

As the game progressed, Blyth began to assert themselves, and Bankole had to save as Todd and Willie Most burst through.

Trying to salvage a point, Hyde committed more men to attack, but that left gaps and, with four minutes left, Atkinson ran onto a through ball and knocked it home.

Hyde: Bankole 5, Gallagher 6, Pybus 6, Wilson 7, Reid 6, Leberl 6, Jones 6, Henshaw 6, James 6, Carroll 5, Donnelly 5. Subs: Camilleri 5 for Leberl (72), Moncrieffe 5 for James (80), Murray 5 for Donnelly (85).

Blyth: Burrige, Farrey, Locker, Raffel, Gamble, Walker, Todd, Henderson, Most, McGargle, Cole. Subs: Page for McGargle (46), Fletcher for Most (75), Bond.

Ref: Richard Sutton (Bollington).