



West Wallsend skipper Richard Endacott, left, takes on Adamstown striker David Bock in Saturday's grand final.

# Goalie spurs soccer victory

By ROBERT DILLON

AUSTRALIAN junior representative John Russell proved the inspiration behind West Wallsend's 2-1 win over Adamstown Rosebuds in Saturday's Northern NSW Soccer Federation first division grand final at Macquarie Field.

The 17-year-old goalkeeper, born and bred in the heart of Westy territory, saved at least three probable goals to thwart Adamstown's bid for a grand final win to complement their premiership.

Westy coach Trevor Smyth heaped praise on the youngster and declared he had the ability to rise to the top of Australian soccer if he dedicates himself.

'John had an outstanding game, he's been our unsung hero all year,' Smyth said. 'He's only 17 but he showed his maturity out there tonight. Two of the saves he pulled off tonight were sensational.'

'He's got the credentials to be the Australian keeper if he wants to. Tonight should help him on his way.'

Russell compared the win to his successful World Youth Cup tour with the 'Joeys' last year.

'I've played for Australia against Brazil and beaten them and this comes very close to that,' he said. 'You play all season to achieve a win in the grand final. It's unbelievable, a real thrill.'

Russell's near faultless display at the back must have broken the heart of Adamstown coach Neville Power and his team.

Rosebuds have won the past two premierships but each time have been unable to put the icing on their cake in the grand final. Last season Austral United came back from a 0-2 half-time deficit to win 3-2 and on Saturday night it was Westy, which Adamstown had beaten three times during the season, that prevented a premiership double for Rosebuds.

Power admitted the lack of success in grand finals was frustrating but was pleased with his team's effort on Saturday.

'I was a bit disappointed for the players, I thought they did enough to win it,' he said.

'Grand finals are a one-off thing and rely very much on luck and the bounce of the ball.'

'We had a couple of chances to hit the lead but John Russell made a couple of good saves that proved costly for us.'

Westy took a 1-0 lead in the 40th minute after striker Glen Cameron goaled, capitalising on smart lead-up work from midfielder Paul Waddingham and defender Scott Wilson.

Rosebuds had the chance to level proceedings nine minutes after half-time but a spectacular, diving save by Russell prevented the goal.

Four minutes later, however, Rosebuds' experienced captain John McQuarrie put a blot on Russell's copybook when he pushed a ball past him for the equaliser.

In the 63rd minute a Brett Baldwin header took Westy to a 2-1 lead, and that scoreline, despite a few close shaves, remained intact until full-time.