Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

Loy Yang B Gippsland Power manfully answered another challenge in the 2011 TAC Cup season with a comprehensive victory over the Northern Knights in wet and windy conditions at Coburg last Sunday. Admittedly, the Knights were far from full strength due to school commitments and injury but, it was the manner of the victory that ha spectators looking for superlatives at the end of the game. Put simply the Power blasted the Knights out of the game with four quarters of tough, relentless, aggressive and most importantly, smart football.

For most of the season the Power have played this uncompromising style of game but haven’t used the ball as effectively as the coaching panel would have liked. Consequently they have often squandered the advantage that their hardness gave them and haven’t finished their work off. However, in this match they were far more productive when moving the ball up the ground and rarely overdid the handball that sold them into trouble in the earlier games. The key forwards were able to work one out with opponents and relished having the ball delivered to them quickly in this situation.

It was the Power who kicked with the advantage of a strong breeze and after some good work by Danny Butcher, Mat Willcocks found Tim Membrey for the opening goal. They then wasted some inside fifty opportunities with sloppy finishing before Traralgon team mates Nick Graham and Membrey combined for a vital goal. Not to outdone, prolific ball-winner Clay Smith bombed one form inside the centre square before some hard work by debutant Drew Mc Grath resulted in another to Membrey.

While the forward line was getting it all together, the defence was miserly and were making the Knights forwards struggle to win a possession let alone have a scoring opportunity. Some more effective work in the packs by McGrath gave Smith another and by the first break, the Power led by thirty seven points. More importantly they had absolutely pounded the Knights in the contested issues and had placed huge doubts in their minds about their ability to win the ball without suffering greatly to do so.

The big test for the Power was to come as the Knights had the advantage of the wind and were looking for redemption after having their pride hurt by the first term assault. It was obvious that they were going to be more competitive but the Power were in no mood to step aside and opened the term with their trademark hardness. Some good ball use by Smith and Willcocks into wind resulted in a simple set shot to Graham and then Josh Tynan, Sam Docherty, Willcocks and Graham combined to give Smith his third in an exhilarating passage of play.

It took a dodgy fifty metre penalty to allow the Knights to kick their first of the game and they seemed to lift after finally breaking the shackles of the miserly Power defence. They soon had their second after a deplorable free kick but that was the end of the penny section as the Power turned the screws and went to the long break leading by six goals.

In all of their games in 2011 the Power have been unable to put four consistent quarters together and the pressure was on to keep the momentum going in tough conditions. It was an arm wrestle early before Daniel Jackson and Butcher worked together to allow Shaun Maruisc to kick the all important first goal. Will Hams then found Smith for his fourth of the game before the Knights capitalised on a turnover to record their first score against the wind. McGrath went quick and long up forward where he found another first gamer, Jack Doderico who goaled after a strong pack mark.

The Power were on a roll and they upped the ante with Marusic charging hard to win the ball and feed it off to Smith who then found Membrey with a classic kick to advantage. In arguably their best passage of play for their season, the Power had shown just how good they could be if they stuck to the game plan. Marusic then intimidated his opponents to win a free kick and convert for another before Josh Scott and Marusic found Membrey for a brilliant team goal.

The Power had not only maintained their unique intensity in the contests but had been able to use the ball with great efficiency and a lot of vision and had created several highly effective avenues to goal which they used quickly and often. It meant that they went into the last quarter with a sixty seven point lead and with the momentum strongly in their favour.

In the early part of the last term the Power were in attack but couldn’t reward themselves with the goals that their good work deserved. Smith and Anthony Tipungwuti created half a chance for Marusic and he did the rest with a great goal. Not to be outdone, the Knights scored on the rebound but it inspired Doderico to run from defence and find Membrey with a long penetrating kick forward.

Unlike other games, the Power were continuing to keep the pressure on every contest and the Knights were struggling to get the ball forward despite having the breeze at their back. To their credit they persisted and scored the next two goals to restore some scoreboard respectability. Tipungwuti then wove some magic to find Jordan Symons who kicked a clever snap and by the final siren the Power had recorded their most impressive win of the season.

Final scores Lo Yang B Gippsland Power 16 goals 15 behinds 111 points defeated Northern Knights 6 goals 4 behinds 40 points. Goal kickers Tim Membrey 6, Clay Smith 4, Shaun Marusic 3, Jack Doderico, Nick Graham and Jordan Symons 1. In a stunning display of hard running, fearless attack on the contest and clever ball use Clay Smith set the tone for his side. Nearly forty possessions, twelve marks and ten crunching tackles on top of four goals is a fair day’s work and the intimidation factor of his intense efforts would have given opponents nightmares for days after the game.

Hard working forward Shaun Marusic thrived with the opportunity to get quick and direct service but really dominated when in the thick of the action and winning contested ball. He not only took many pack marks but had the fitness to run and take on the opposition at ground level. Fellow forward Tim Membrey returned from injury and dominated with his strong leads, brilliant marking and accurate kicking. The team gave him the space to move in and respected his leads which meant that his opponents had no chance to stop him.

After finding form last week, Danny Butcher started well with his customary hardness in the packs before tacking it up a notch in the second half by becoming a strong running option as well as hard ball winner. His use of the ball was clever and he seemed to relish the chance to create. Defender Sam Docherty totally shut down opponents with disciplined play but had the confidence to set up play with run and carry and long penetrating kicks to the team’s advantage. Young winger Daniel Jackson has adapted to TAC Cup tempo and was in the thick of the action through the midfield. He won plenty of the hard balls as well as being a link player for the defenders who generated drive with attacking play.

Damien Hector thrived in the heat of battle with his typically uncompromising attack on the ball and ability to run hard all over the ground. He won countless possessions as well as protecting others in packs and did so from the opening bounce till the final siren. Defender Josh Tynan has been a consistent contributor all season and once again combined disciplined defence with the willingness to run and take the game on when he saw the need. He initiated many positive attacking moves all day. Youngster Will Hams had a late start to the season due to injury but has quickly stepped up to the mark with a combination of excellent skills and hardness in the packs. He too set up a lot of play with his great work ethic.

Adam Dowie was delighted with the boy’s four quarter effort but was quick to warn against getting too far ahead of themselves after one good performance. There were some key indicators to please the coaches including far more kicks to handballs, nearly one hundred tackles, over sixty forward fifty entries with one score for every two entries and ninety marks. It indicates a lot of hard work but, more importantly, a lot of smart play.

They now go into a vital game against Oakleigh Chargers next week and they will be keen to keep their early season momentum going. Both sides could be without key players due to state squad commitments and this gives the selectors a chance to bring in players like Tom Muir as well as have another look at some of the boys who played earlier in the season and who already know what’s required at this level.

In 2010 this part of the season was the turning point for the year as the remaining boy’s stepped up to the challenge and started to play up to their potential. When the less experienced players came into the side they were well supported by the others and it’s important that they keep the same intensity this season.