GIPPSLAND POWER MEDIA RELEASE

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Loy Yang B Gippsland Power went into round ten of the 2011 TAC Cup season on mission after a disappointing loss in their previous game. They had slaughtered a chance to win against the Geelong Falcons and needed to get back to the accountable football that has been their trademark so far this season. Adding to their intent was an opportunity to consolidate their position on top of the ladder as three of the sides threatening their spot had been beaten the day before and the boys had a realistic chance to achieve both goals.

Both sides went into the match well down on their best eighteen with the Power missing Clay Smith and Josh Tynan who rested after a tough nationals program and Jayden Steers, Damien Hector and Shannon Lange out due to illness or injury. This meant that several less prominent Power players had another chance to consolidate their place in the team and get more game time to do so. The Eastern Ranges were similarly restricted at selection and put their faith in several precocious under sixteen players to fill the void.

Conditions were perfect for football and a large crown was in attendance to see if the boys were up to the challenges involved. It took a while for the Power to get their game going and Matt Willcocks broke the drought after an Eastern error. He then became a provider by using skill and vision to find Jack Johnstone for their second. Instead of going on with it, the Power became a little lazy and wasted several opportunities with poor finishing and decision making.

Lively forward Nick Graham scored a clever goal after marking close to the boundary but the boys were far from convincing when going into attack. A free kick gave the Ranges a vital goal and by the end of the quarter the Power led by an unconvincing nineteen points. They had ten scoring shots to one for the term but only managed three goals and this meant that the Ranges were far closer on the scoring board than what general play indicated.

Early in the second quarter the Power began to play more purposeful football and Simon Deery found a busy Danny Butcher to open the scoring. Hayden Hector and Shaun Wyatt combined and put the ball to the hotspot where Josh Scott crumbed the pack for another. Some more skill and vision by Hector resulted in another to Jordan Staley and it was looking decidedly ugly for the young Ranges team.

However, instead of going on with this productive play, the Power began to flirt with their form, get ahead of themselves and committed the sin of not paying their opponents enough respect. The resultant turnovers were pounced on by the Eastern side and they kicked three unanswered goals to put themselves back into the contest and embarrass the Power for their arrogance. The key indicator of the Power’s lack of focus was the fact that they had equal numbers of kicks and handballs and this meant that they were lairising rather than following the game plan.

By the end of the term the Power led by twenty points and it appeared that they hadn’t learned the lesson from the Geelong game. Coach Adam Dowie used the long break to “remind” the boys what was necessary to be a top TAC Cup side and it appeared as if his words had an immediate effect when Drew McGrath kicked long and direct into the forward line and Graham swooped on the ball at the base of the pack. It was to be that start of the Power’s most productive term for the season as they played far more accountable and direct football.

Warragul youngsters Tom Fusinato and Tom Muir then combined before some good forward pressure saw Wyatt finish off with a captains goal. Not to be outdone, Staley took a “speccy” and went long to find Wyatt for his second form outside the fifty metre line. Some more scrappy play involving Tim Membrey, Hector and Staley was finished off by Graham and the Power were finally starting to play purposeful football. They were on a roll and Staley, Butcher and Chris Williams linked up to give Wyatt yet another goal.

After setting up three goals in a row, Staley decided to join in the fun and kicked a long bomb. Graham had been busy kicking goals but turned provider to find Willcocks who converted his opportunity. The Power rampage was far from over when Williams bravely put his body on the line to give Muir a sitter. Well against the run of play, the Ranges scored from the next centre bounce but the Power hit back after Graham went long to find Butcher for the last of the quarter.

Going into the last term the Power led by seventy even points and had shown their supporters just what they were capable of when they played the sort of positive football that Adam had called for. The coaches had the luxury of being able to move some players around and rest others in the last term and this meant that at time their intensity wasn’t at full strength. Despite this Membrey, Graham and Muir used the ball well to find Wyatt for his fourth and it looked as if the Ranges were in for another pounding.

To their great credit the Eastern youngsters persisted and began to win more of the ball as the Power lost the momentum. They punished the Power with two goals after some slack defence and captain Wyatt decided enough was enough as he went long and direct to allow Williams to kick one form on the fifty metre line. Eastern were far from done and scored another on the rebound before Deery, Staley and Graham joined forces to allow Muir to kick his third.

The Ranges scored a great long goal from the boundary line but then gifted Jack Doderico with an easy goal after a defensive brain fade. Some more good work by Traralgon teammates Membrey and Graham resulted in Scott scoring his second and by the final siren the Power had recorded an eighty three point victory despite going missing for much of the second term.

Final scores, Loy Yang B Gippsland Power 21 goals 15 behinds 141 points defeated Eastern Ranges 9 goals 4 behinds 58 points. Goal kickers Shaun Wyatt 4, Nick Graham and Tom Muir 3, Jordan Staley, Josh Scott, Matt Willcocks and Danny Butcher 2, Jack Doderico, Jack Johnstone and Chris Williams 1. All season Shaun Wyatt has led the side by stellar example and once again set the tone for his mates with a stunning performance. His stats will say that he won many possessions, took lots of marks and laid crunching tackles but it would belie the impact he had on the game. More importantly he was the general for the team as he directed traffic with great discipline and purpose.

Once again Danny Butcher was in the thick of the action with his fearless attack on the ball and ability to run and set up play as well. He applied intense pressure on the opposition, won many hard balls and then took them on with his pace and kicking skills. He too was pivotal in setting the tone for the team. Youngster Josh Scott plays as if he weighs 20 kilograms more than he actually does. He put his body on the line to win many possessions in the biggest and ugliest packs and then set up others with his vision and purposeful use of the ball. He capped his game off with two important goals.

“Old-timer” Sean Marusic monstered the Ranges youngsters with his powerful contested marking and ability to crash through pack and set up running play for the team. He was a pivotal player in defence and attack and showed discipline and poise to put the ball in dangerous positions for the team. Nick Graham returned to the sort of form that made such a valuable player early in the season as he worked hard around the forward line either kicking goals or setting them up for others. His ability to be in the right spot at the right time was excellent.

Midfielder Hayden Hector was another to work hard all day as he attempted to direct play for the side in the heavier traffic. He too put his body on the line but more importantly was able to be a running player who used the ball with skill and vision. Chris Williams relished the chance to have more game time in the engine room for the side and showed that he has the courage and skill to play a role for the team in the coming weeks. He won a lot of tough possessions and used them with purpose.

Defender Ryley Hall was impassable with his aerial skills in the bigger packs as well as the ability to run and link up with others to generate positive play. He made excellent decisions all day and rarely wasted an opportunity to use the ball with accuracy. Tom Fusinato is a disciplined and hard working player and once again he was at his best in the thick of the action. His ability to win the hard ball, do the one-percenters and retain his poise under pressure was a critical factor in his game.

Going into the game Adam Dowie had some key targets for the side to achieve in terms of their commitment to the team plan and their ability to apply consistent pressure on their opponents. The result says that they did so in spades but deeper analysis shows that they lifted their work rate in terms of his key indicators well above what the scoreboard showed. Despite the fact that the opposition was under-manned, the way that they played for three quarters was extremely pleasing and would give him great confidence going into the business end of the season.

Adding to his enthusiasm was the fact that so many players stepped up to have significant roles in the performance after being given more game time in the action. Another important positive was the fact that the team had ten goal scorers for the game. Closer analysis shows that the team’s key forward didn’t contribute any goals and, if he’d been asked to say what would happen if this occurred in a game, he’d be most unlikely to predict a fourteen goal win.

The Power now travels to Melbourne to take on the Western Jets in another challenging game. On a positive note they are likely to get Jayden Steers, Shannon Lange and Damien Hector back but will be without at least four key players who will be playing for Victorian Country in the Nationals over the weekend. The Jets will also be without key personnel and the Power will need to be focused on what was so good about their performance against the Ranges and work hard to eliminate the sort of lapses that were so poor in their performance.