Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

The final round of the 2012 TAC Cup season saw the Loy Yang B Gippsland Power emerge with four premiership points, when they defeated the Northern Knights at Moe. On paper the Power seemingly had little to worry about as the Knights had only won three games during the year however the knights proved to be very difficult opposition given the conditions and with the inclusion of several key players.

An even closer analysis of their efforts this season showed that they were a hard-working and honest side who were highly competitive against good teams and were unlucky not to be a lot higher on the ladder. Power coach Nick Stevens was well aware of the threat that they represented for the side and addressed their competitiveness throughout the week. Unfortunately for the Power, only a handful of players listened to what he told them and, as a consequence, the majority of the side really struggled to cope with the determination and honesty of the Knights.

It appeared as if the Power were well placed to be better than the previous week when they lost against the Dragons. Key players Josh Cashman, Jack Leslie and Shane Jamieson returned while, adding to the positives, skilful Bairnsdale youngster Derek Hayes made his TAC Cup debut after being held back by injury earlier in the season.

The game started well for the Power after some strong work at the opening bounce by Shannen Lange and Nate Paredes resulted in a goal to Tim Membrey. Instead of building on their good work the Power then wasted several forward fifty entries with poor decision making and finishing. As they had done in the Dragons game, the Power were struggling to man up when the Knights won the ball and their turnovers were gifting them with many such opportunities.

Some scrambly play by the Power saw Daniel Jackson set up Lange for a late goal but they only went to the first change fourteen points up after having twice as many forward fifty entries than the Knights. The Knights showed them how to use the ball effectively at the start of the quarter when they capitalised on poor manning up by the Power. Once again the Power were wasting the ball up forward and their inefficiency was punished when the Knights kicked another after some soft defensive play.

A classy interception by Aaron Heppell allowed Darcy Irwin to kick a vital goal for the side but, once again, the Knights were given far too much latitude by some vey lazy work by the Power. Nick Graham and Ben Kearns combined to give Irwin his second for the quarter but, by the long break, they only led by two goals despite having far more scoring opportunities than the Knights. It appeared as if the Power were content to put the ball anywhere inside the forward fifty rather than use it intelligently and to the side’s advantage.

Nick read the riot act to the boys at half time and was particularly disappointed with their accountability and willingness to follow the most basic elements of the team’s game plan. It appeared as if they hadn’t got the stern message early in the term as they again wasted several possible scoring opportunities with bad skills and finishing. After one of the many turnovers that resulted from such poor ball use, the Knights scored another soft goal but the Power continued to bomb the ball forward with little skill or accuracy.

It took some vision and class by Matt Northe and Graham to set up Anthony Tipungwuti for a critical goal by the Power but then gifted the Knights with another easy goal after some more poor defensive thinking. By the last change they were only nine points up after again dominating the forward fifty entries. As a consequence, they went into the last quarter under the pump instead of having the game sewn up based on the chances that they had wasted to kick goals.

Just to illustrate this wastefulness, the Knights scored two easy goals after capitalising on more poor manning up by the Power. Some good work under pressure by Kearns saw a much need reply by Northe and he then Matt combined with Graham to see Derek Hayes take advantage of a lucky bounce to put the Power back on track. “Walla” Tipungwuti created a chance for a clever snap by Wil Hams and it seemed as if the Power were finally upping the ante.

Another defensive “howler” by the Power allowed the Knights to get back within a kick and it was game on. Good work by Northe and Jack Leslie gave the ball to Jackson who goaled and seemingly put the issue finally beyond doubt. In the final moments the Knights kicked another but the Power held on well to emerge unconvincing winners by two points.

Final scores, Loy Yang B Gippsland Power 9 goals 10 behinds 64 points defeated the Northern Knights 8 goals 14 behinds 62 points. Goal kickers Darcy Irwin 2, Derek Hayes, Matt Northe, Tim Membrey, Wil Hams, Daniel Jackson, Shannen Lange and Anthony Tipungwuti 1.

Tough Sale on-baller Shannen Lange was one of the few Power players who could hold his head high after another superb display of hard-nosed and creative work. He tackled with enormous intensity and put his body on the line over and over again to gather thirty plus possessions and played a crucial role in the side’s win. Fellow on-baller Nick Graham matched Shannen’s amazing statistics in yet another fine game where he was a key play maker with his skills and decision making as well as being one of the team’s hardest players in the contested issues all over the ground. He averages close to ten tackles a game this year and has become a key player because of his stunning work rate.

Defender Ryley Hall was under far too much pressure because of the many turnovers that his team mates allowed due to their poor finishing up forward. He stood tall against the constant challenges and totally shut down dangerous opponents with his disciplined and hard work in the thick of the action. Up forward Tom Muir had to rise to another severe challenge as the side was without Josh Scott before the game as well as losing Tim Membrey early in the match. He too responded manfully by leading up continually in attack as well as working hard at ground level as well.

Young defender Aaron Heppel was another let down by team mates up field but responded brilliantly to defeat opponents as well as winning many important possessions which he used to telling effect. His ability in the air and at ground level was critical and he made great decisions in both areas. Josh Cashman was given an important run-with role and did a fine job in minimising the impact of very dangerous opponents. He too worked very hard to restrict their impact as well as winning several important possessions himself.

The Power now steps up to the pressure of finals football at Visy Park next weekend. They have won a vital double chance but Nick Stevens has set them the realistic challenge of not having to rely on it by winning this game and moving directly into the Preliminary Final two weeks later. Based on their recorded for much of the season, they have dominated the competition in the sorts of statistics that matter in finals. However, i the past couple of games they have been very ordinary in these areas and he stressed the need for them to refocus if they were to play to their enormous potential.

He spoke very positively after the game about the fact that there were now back to square one and it was as if the season started again. The finals were a new set of challenges and if they went back to their best efforts then they were capable of great things. He knows that they have the ability to respond to these sorts of challenges and will be working with them to address the recent deficiencies and get back to the hard and team oriented football that have been the trademarks of their best form.