GIPPSLAND POWER MEDIA RELEASE

BY BRYAN MITCHELL

A trip to Bendigo proved to be very productive for the Loy Yang B Gippsland Power when they recorded a resounding victory over the Bendigo Pioneers. After a narrow loss to the Chargers the week before Nick Stevens had focussed on the positives from that game and encouraged the boys to back themselves and keep trying to apply the key elements of the side’s game plan. He would have been pleased with the way that they followed his lead to record such a comprehensive victory where they stuck to the game plan for the full four quarters.

The Power went into the game without Christian Buykx-Smith and Josh Cashman due to injury but this gave first-gamers Adam Diamond and Ben Thomas the chance to show their wares. Clever forward Ben Kearns returned from Casey in the VFL after kicking five goals in an impressive debut at such an elite level. This meant that the side still had three “old-timers” available for the multitude of recruiters to see at Bendigo on a big weekend of football.

On the twenty minute mark, the Pioneers scored on the rebound but the Power responded with Carr setting up Declan Keilty for a clever snap. By the first change the Power led by fourteen points at the first change and the Pioneers had shown that they would be competitive if allowed to apply their game plan. Nick reminded the boys what was required in such circumstances and it didn’t take long for them to show that they were up to the challenge.

Some very clever ball use by Lachie Channing allowed Alex Saunders to score a good goal but the boys then began to miss opportunities to extend their lead. Some more intense pressure by the Power saw Keilty become a goal provider for Brenton Rees and then Declan got another for himself with a good snap. Some excellent skills and uncanny vision by Saunders resulted in Scott kicking his fourth for the match and then Alex finished off more good ball use to give the Power a forty-four point lead at the long break.

The Power had shut down much of the Pioneers avenues to attack and had kept up the intense pressure on their opponents all over the ground. The result of this ability and willingness to do the hard work to apply the game plan was that they seemed to have put the issue beyond doubt but needed to continue to work to finish the game off.

In the opening minutes of the third term Adam Diamond gave Scott his fifth goal and then Channing linked up with Ben Kearns whose strong hands in the marking duel were amazing. He repeated the deed almost straight away and it was clear that the Pioneers were struggling to cope with the intense pressure being applied on them all over the field. Keilty was again involved in setting up an opportunity for a team mate and Carr kicked a long bomb from the fifty metre line.

The Pioneers scored their first goal for over fifty minutes of play and then repeated the job to remind the Power that they needed to keep working hard if they were to put a smile on their coach’s face by the end of the match. Diamond went long and direct from the resultant centre bounce and once again Kearns marked well and kicked accurately. It was the Pioneers who scored next but yet again Keilty was the initiator for another long Carr major. Late in the quarter Keilty and Carr linked together with long and direct kicks with Lukas Webb on the receiving end.

By the last break the Power lead was sixty-seven points and they were again challenged to maintain their composure by the coach and work hard to finish the game off. Excellent forward pressure saw Scott score again and he soon had another as a result of a free kick. It seemed like it was show time for the Power when Carr and Channing played keepings off before Carr kicked another long bomb from deep on the boundary line. Some quick and clever use of the ball by Scott allowed “Poombah” Saunders to kick his third and the Power were looking likely to record a massive win.

Another long and direct forward thrust by Aaron Heppell saw Kearns score another before some more “magic” by Webb and Tom Muir gave Scott yet another major. It took a very soft free kick for the Pioneers to score their only goal of the quarter but this inspired the Power to up the ante even further. Muir again used the ball intelligently and Scott kicked his ninth major for the match. By the final siren the margin was one hundred and five points and reflected the Power’s hard and disciplined play perfectly.

It had been a stunning performance by the Power and really highlighted what they are capable of when the play disciplined team football and follow the side’s game plan. For a long team the Power has had the reputation of being the hardest and fittest side in the TAC Cup. It’s a true assessment of their capabilities and they had close to one hundred tackles in the match and dominated all of the important statistics like contested possessions. Their dominance was reflected by key issues like the fact that they had twice the number of forward fifty entries to the Pioneers and kept them goalless for half of the match.

Final socres; Loy Yang B Gippsland Power 23 goals 11 behinds 149 points defeated Bendigo Pioneers 6 goals 8 behinds 44 points. Goal kickers; Josh Scott 9, Ben Kearns 4, Alex Saunders and Alex Carr 3, Declan Keilty 2, Luksa Webb and Brenton Rees 1. It was obvious who was the Power’s most valuable player as Josh Scott was stunning with his nine goals as a result of his excellent marking skills and accurate finishing. He has responded brilliantly to the challenge of being on over-age player and is not only finishing off the work of others but is leading by strong example.

Defender Paul Pattison is another to be challenge by the coach to play a bigger role in the side and he illustrated perfectly just how hard he has worked to make it happen. He not only beat key opponents but also backed himself to set up positive play with his newfound strength and excellent ball skills under pressure. Ruckman Jack Leslie illustrated his value to the team by not only dominating the aerial duels in the ruck as well winning many individual possessions with his hard-nosed play and strength in marking contests. Once fully fit he will present opponents with an almost unstoppable set of skills to counteract.

Liam Nash has a well deserved reputation for being one of the hardest players in the TAC Cup with his uncanny ability to take on and blitz top opposition players as well as working hard to initiate play for others in the thick of the biggest and ugliest packs. He too looks set for a great season once he is at full strength. Clever forward Alex Saunders has also worked very hard to lift his game up to the level that his coach believes he is capable of. He too showed the benefits of his amazing work rate with many important and hard tackles plus his unique ball skills by hand and foot even when under intense pressure.

Alex Carr is another key player who has had to work hard to overcome injuries but showed what to expect now that he is fully fir for the first time in almost a year. He won many contested possessions as well as being a key link player by hand and foot. He capped his game of with some excellent long goals. His fellow on ball terrier Lachie Channing was another whose work rate was outstanding with a combination of the ability to apply intense pressure on opponents with crunching tackles and the vision to find team mates as he set up play.

On a day when the Power played such efficient team football, Aaron Heppell, Lukas Webb, Ed Morris, Nate Paredes, Jordie Cunico and Tom Muir were important contributors. They applied themselves to Nick’s game plan with great discipline and used their skills, strength and determination to ensure that they soundly beat opponents as well as using the ball with accuracy and purpose.

The TAC Cup now has a bye where the state squad will have a camp to prepare for the national championships later in the season. The Power will have several players involved in this process and most of the remaining players will have a rare chance to go back to their clubs in local football. It’s likely that Nick will also use the opportunity to allow some key players to have a well deserved rest after going through intense work over the pre-season as well as a tough start to the 2013 TAC Cup season.

After the break the Power will take on the Sandringham Dragons in another good test for Nick and the boys as they continue their intense learning curve in the 2013 season. It’s likely that Ben Kearns will return to Casey in the VFL and this will give Nick a crucial chance to look at another of the squad in such a pressure match.