Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

The 2009 TAC Cup season for Loy Yang B Gippsland Power began with a loss to Dandenong Stingrays but new coach Damian Carroll was still able to draw some positives from what was a disappointing defeat. The boys had worked hard during the pre-season and had been impressive in the practice matches against other TAC Cup teams. However in the heat of battle they started slowly and then played catch-up football for the rest of the game.

Going into the game confidence was justifiably high that the side would be competitive due to their practice match form, but more importantly the fact that 18 of the 24 boys selected having already been significant contributors in the 2008 season. Jack Carson, Mitch Dowse, Jed Lamb, Aiden Lindsay, Nick Pincott and Ryan Tatterson made their debuts in a team that seemed to have proven players on each line.

It was obvious in the early minutes of the game that the Stingrays were on song and were far more effective with their use of the ball. The Power were working hard to apply intense pressure on contests all over the ground but, in their enthusiasm, often over committed to the ball. This left some of the Stingrays unmanned and ready to clinically exploit the inevitable turnovers due to skill and decision making errors made by the enthusiastic Power players.

Consequently they had three goals on the board very quickly and had the Power on the back foot. Midway through the term deft ruckwork from Nathan Vardy allowed Koby Stevens to surge forward and set up John Butcher for a critical reply for the Power. Instead of going on with this direct and positive play the Power again allowed turnovers to occur and the Stingrays scored two more easy goals as a result.

Good work from Russell Lehman saw Edward Carr link with Tim Northe and it appeared that the Power were getting back in the game. On the siren the Stingrays struck again and went the first break with a solid 29 point lead and more importantly seeming to have all the answers for anything that the Power could throw up against them.

It appeared that the Power were still struggling to have the sort of composure needed to capitalise on their hard work in the packs when the Stingrays opened the scoring with another goal from a turnover. Jack Weston, Dean Woodhead and David Donchi used poise and vision to give Butcher his second for the game. Almost on cue the Stingrays replied with another gift goal and it took clever play by Northe, Vardy and Butcher to give Pincott a crucial goal.

The Power had played a better brand of football but were still no where as disciplined or effective as the Stingrays and trailled by 28 points at the long break. Damian Carroll reminded them of their game plan during half time and implored them to limit the turnovers that gave the Stingrays so many uncontested goals.

It was obvious that they had heeded the call and were applying more effective pressure in the contested balls. Stevens set Vardy up for a brilliant mark that he duly converted to a goal. Once again, instead of being inspired, the Power allowed the Stingrays to regain the initiative with two more soft goals on the rebound. The pressure was on the boys to respond and slowly but surely they began to regain their composure and get more purpose into their play.

Some excellent forward pressure allowed Pincott in for another then clever ball use saw Lehman set up Vardy for the Power’s first consecutive goal for the game. Jed Lamb used his pace to allow Carr to score and suddenly the Stingrays were looking vulnerable. Stevens then joined the party when he combined with Lamb to allow Butcher to score and the Power were suddenly within reach and with the momentum going their way. The Stingrays took advantage of a defensive error to stem the flow but some excellent work by Weston and Pincott created a telling goal from nothing.

With minutes to go in the term it appeared as if the Power had finally put their turnovers behind them and were ready to put the Stingrays to the test. Three Stingray goals proved that this was an illusion and suddenly all the Power’s good work was undone and they trailed by 29 points with a quarter to go.

The Stingrays scored the first of the last term and seemingly were set to race away to a comprehensive victory. More pressure from Butcher and Houghton gave Butcher his fourth for the game but another turnover gifted the Stingrays with the goal that finally put the issue beyond doubt. Butcher missed a sitter before kicking a miracle goal and then Sing, Carr and Mitch Golby worked hard to kick the final major of the game.

Final scores Dandenong Stingrays 16 goals 10 behinds 106 points defeated Loy Yang B Gippsland Power 13 goals 8 behinds 86 points. Goal kickers John Butcher 5, Nick Pincott 3, Nathan Vardy 2, Tim Northe, Edward Carr and Mitch Golby 1.

Nathan Vardy returned after a shoulder reconstruction mid way through the 2008 season and dominated the ruck contests as well as being a potent force around the ground. He relished the chance to get back into the action. Although hampered by a restricted preseason John Butcher was still able put his impressive stamp on the game not only kicking goals but also working hard at ground level to apply considerable forward pressure all game.

Koby Stevens showed just why he has been honoured with the captaincy of the AFL/ AIS Academy squad to tour South Africa in the coming weeks. He was in the thick of the action all day and not only won countless hard balls but also ran and set up play as well. Nathan Pincot’s pace and ability to read the play allowed him to win and then use the ball with poise and precision up forward where he was the perfect foil for Butcher and Vardy.

Another debutant, Mitch Dowse, also made an impressive start to his TAC Cup career with some excellent work in the packs as well as clever linking play all over the ground. Youngster Dyson Heppell was at home under the intense pressure and showed that he too will play a significant role in the sides prospects for the 2009 TAC Cup season.

Damian Carroll will now turn his attention to eliminating the Power’s clash with the strong Geelong Falcons unit at Skilled Stadium. He would have been pleased with the boys persistence during the game but will be working on the issues that he highlighted in his address to the boys after the game.

Over-use of the ball, not taking the first option, not enough four quarter efforts and not enough talk were key issues for him and it meant that the Stingrays were often given goals that they didn’t expect after the Power committed turnovers by poor options and skill errors. The Stingrays scored at least ten of their goals this way and the Falcons will be just as lethal if they are given so many opportunities to score with a minimum of pressure on the rebound. The boys know that are capable of doing much better but will have to play smarter if they are to pull it off next week.