Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

After a typically slow start to their match against the Western Jets, the engie Gippsland Power followed their pattern for the 2017 season and got back into the game with a combination of their hardness and more focussed use of the ball. Consequently, when they led by twenty one points at the last break, they looked likely to record a well-deserved victory. However, they didn’t finish the game off and the Jets were able to record a two point win.

Selectors made three changes to the team that had played so well against the Bendigo Pioneers with Rylan Henkle and Aiden Quigley back after injury and AFL Academy duties respectively. The third change saw Leongatha youngster Boadie Motton make his TAC Cup debut and this meant that there were ten bottom-age players in the team.

It was the Jets who made the early break after the Power defence were caught on the back foot. Things got even worse when the Jets were able to rebound the ball will little or no pressure by the Power and score a very soft goal. Some more purposeful ball use up field and then strength by Will Stephenson created an opportunity for Irving Mosquito and he kicked a vital goal for the team. To add insult to injury, an “iffy” umpiring decision gifted the Jets with another and things were looking ominous for the Power.

In the latter part of the quarter the Power conceded far too many scoring opportunities to the Jets but, luckily for the boys, they failed to take advantage of some very soft defensive decisions. At the first change the Jets led by nineteen points but it should have been a lot more considering the fact that they had thirteen scoring opportunities but only managed three majors. Obviously, Leigh had plenty of issues to address during the break with the short kicking in defence being one of the critical area needing more direct action.

Some hardness in a tight contest resulted in a free kick to Nick Hogan and the Jets made it a certain goal after some very ill-disciplined play. Key defender, Sean Masterson is renowned for his ability to take strong, intercept marks, and he used one to help to set up some excellent ball use that resulted in a goal to Matt McGannon. Sean then repeated his “party piece” and the boys again used the ball effectively to allow Aiden Quigley to kick another major.

It seemed as if the team had realised the value of thinking about how to use the ball more efficiently and Callum Porter, Quigley and Masterson combined with vision and skill to set up Will Broadbent for a crucial gaol. The Power were on a roll but began to miss gettable opportunities and, as if on script, the Jets scored a very easy goal on the rebound from one of these misses. More chances were wasted late in the term but, by the long break, the Power led by four points and seemingly were ready to take control of the match.

Statistically, it wasn’t too hard to see why the Power had seized the initiative, as they had double the number of inside fifties compared to the Jets and, even more importantly, they had applied a huge number of crunching tackles all over the ground. Another key factor was the move of the club’s hardest onballer, Callum Porter, into defence and he initiated many positive attacking forays as well as shutting down his opponent’s influence. One downside was the fact that another tough-nut, Nick Hogan, was injured an unable to make a significant contribution for the rest of the match.

Early in the third term, the Power maintained their momentum but were again off target despite being so clever in the use of the ball to set the opportunities. It took some outstanding forward pressure by Cody Henness to set up McGannon for his second and, from the resultant centre bounce, Sale team mates, Stephenson and Hogan linked up to allow Broadbent to kick a crucial goal. The Power were playing the best team-oriented football for the year so far and seemed to be exploiting their renowned fitness to ensure that it continued.

To illustrate this, Kyle Reid and Julian Patterson were able to move the ball from full back into attack and Henness finished off with a fine goal. Fellow key defender Sean Masterson seemed inspired by Kyle’s excellent play and combined with Jack Hudson and Boadie Motton to let Mosquito use his magical skills to finish off their excellent ball use. With minutes to go, the Power were almost five goals ahead and looking likely to do as they had done in each game this season, win the last quarter.

However, the Jets had other ideas and kicked a very easy and important goal to reduce the Power’s lead to twenty-one points by the last change. The Jets regained the initiative after some soft free kicks gave them two goals and the Power were under extreme pressure to maintain the lead. They began to miss easy goals and to add insult to in injury, a resultant turnover from one of these misses, allowed them to get within one kick of the Power on the scoreboard. The final indignity for the Power came when the Jets kicked the match winning goal after another dodgy free kick and, what seemed to be a very winnable game was lost.

Final scores, Western Jets 9 goals 20 behinds 74 points, defeated engie Gippsland Power 9 goals 16 behinds 70 points. Goal kickers Irving Mosquito, Matt McGannon and Will Broadbent 2, Nick Hogan, Aiden Quigley and Cody Henness 1.

Either in the midfield or in attack, Will Stephenson combined his ability to win contested issues with his uncanny willingness to apply crunching tackles to have a vital impact on the game. He had over twenty possessions and used them with great effect especially when kicking the ball long and direct into attack. Sean Masterson has had a wonderful season so far and once again was able to be the generator of many attacking passages of play after taking his trademark intercepts marks. He totally blitzed his opponents with his tackling and spoiling skills and set a fine example for the youngsters in defence.

Jack Hudson is one such rookie and he too was busy in all key statistical areas. He won many vital contested possessions, applied six crucial tackles and spoiled his opponents marking attempts with disciplined play. He not only beat the opposition in defence but contributed importantly when on ball or in attack. Another player who has had an excellent start to the season is defender Travis Bindley. He was able to play the sort of defensive football that allowed him to nullify the impact of his opposition as well as win, and then effectively use the ball despite being under intense pressure.

Debutant, Boadie Motton made a significant start to his TAC Cup career as he adjusted to the unique tempo of the elite competition very quickly. He played in a variety of positions and was able to excel in the contested issues to win many hard balls as well as applying intense pressure when the opposition had the ball. After being held back by injury, Austin Hodge has quickly regained the fitness needed to make the strong impact he has in aerial skills as well as in contested issues at ground level. His brand of team oriented football was in full effect and he looks ready to be the key attacking player for the rest of the season.

On a day when the negative of the narrow loss was being hardly felt, the club had a huge positive when former player, Beau Vernon, came to see the game and to have a special look on the Leongatha platers that he coaches. Beau played in the Power’s 2005 premiership season as a stunningly talented bottom age player and then took his impact to another level in the side that should have won the 2006 flag.

After time at Casey in the VFL he went to Leongatha and suffered a crippling spinal injury. As expected by those that have known, and highly respected Beau and his commitment levels, he has become an amazing role model. With his ability to focus on what he can achieve no matter how much physical effort and strength of mind was required he inspires his players, school students and the general public as a speaker and even more by his actions under extreme duress.

The Power now travel back to Melbourne to take on the highly rated Sandringham Dragons next Sunday. Leigh and his fellow coaches will need to get the boys to focus on the many positives that were so obvious in the second and third quarters that they dominated so much against the Jets. One key factor needing attention will be the ability to effectively use hard-won scoring opportunities and, as has happened in each of their losses this season, it has been very costly. On paper, it appears to be a tough ask for the Power but, in reality, it is well within their grasp with a little more care with their finishing.