Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

Prior to the start of the engie Gippsland Power’s match against the Calder Cannons there was a scene in their centre of excellence that would ominously indicate the outcome of the match. As the selected group were in the early stages of their preparation, a group of top-age players who were unavailable for selection went through some re-hab work in preparation for their returns over the coming weeks. Closer analysis of the players involved highlighted just how inexperienced the selected side were and how tough a mental and physical challenge they faced.

Those doing the re-hab were; Nick Hogan, Callan McKeon, Austin Hodge, Will Leslie, Kieran Jones, Julian Patterson and Jack Hudson while Tyrone Hayes and CJ Jiath were also unavailable. Even the most negative Power supporter would have recognised that these nine players represented half of the team’s best possible eighteen and at least six of the best ten players on the club’s list. After being highly competitive in all of their matches so far this season, the Power would finally succumb to the pressures that such an absence entailed and surrendered somewhat meekly to a far more determined Cannons team.

Conditions were perfect for good football at Morwell and both sides struggled early to get goals due to stout defence and or poor finishing of opportunities to score. It was the Cannons who opened the scoring with the benefit of a dubious umpiring decision and then scored another after poor Power defensive decisions. The Power continued to squander their scoring chances while the Cannons again had the umpires assisting them with another “gift” goal.

It took some trademark Power pressure by Irving Mosquito, Campbell McKenzie and debutant Josh Wykes to create the chance for Kim Drew to get a vital goal. As if inspired, Drew and Mosquito did the same and, this time; it was captain, Aidan Quigley who capped it off. In the next few moments of the match the Cannons scored two simple goals as the result of a pattern of play that has dogged the Power all season. They went forward haphazardly, kicked terribly and then turned the ball over. The Cannons then took the ball away with little or no pressure and kicked two rebound goals to serve notice that they were typical of at least five more during the rest of the match.

With the Power down by three goals, some vision and skill by Travis Bindley allowed Callum Porter to reduce the margin and give his side some hope for the remainder of the game. The pattern of the quarter was almost a direct copy of the first terms of all but one of the Power’s games this season. They squandered their own, hard-won, scoring opportunities with poor disposals skills and decision making and then allowed the opposition to have play rebound football from the inevitable but unnecessary turnovers.

Early in the second term it was Deja-vu for the Power, wasted scoring opportunities and a rebound goal for the Cannons. Cody Henness applied intense forward pressure to win the ball and kick a key goal for his side. The Cannons hit back with a far too easy goal but, some clever play by South Gippsland’s, Kyle Reid and Matt McGannon created a chance for Boadie Motton and he kicked truly. It was becoming predictable that the Power would waste the ball up forward and that the Cannons would clinically exploit their “gifts.” They kicked two more goals because of this and things were looking grim for the Power.

Some more direct ball use by Brad Daniel and Mosquito resulted in Quigley’s second goal and then Bailey Beck went quick, long and direct to allow Will Stephenson to kick a stealthy goal to put the side within two goals of the Cannons late in the term. Instead of being positive going into the long break, the Power “gave” the Cannons another goal due to inefficient ball use and the half time deficit was sixteen points.

Leigh Brown had some obvious issues to discuss with his side but the degree to which they had been so wasteful would have shocked him. Although the Power kicked four goals during the term, they had twice as many inside fifty entries than the Cannons and were even more wasteful of these chances than any other match this season. To add to has concerns, the traditional ability of the Power to apply intense pressure in contests was lacking and the Cannons gratefully took full advantage of this rare scenario.

If things were bad during the first half, the early moments of the second would have sent shivers through the coaches. Another “gift” to the Cannons after a predictable turnover was then compounded by a second from the resultant centre bounce where the Power applied no direct or indirect pressure at all. Once again Porter was in the thick of the action and he linked up with Stephenson and Tom Fleming to set up Quigley for a fine snap. Some good work under pressure by Henness gave Mosquito half a chance and he showed that was all he needed from a long way out. Instead of building on these examples of positive play, the Power again wasted the ball where it mattered most and the Cannons kicked three in a row due to such gifts and some untypical ill-discipline.

Sean Masterson had been moved into attack and paid his team mates back for a costly fifty metre penalty after winning a free kick. The Cannons scored another goal late in the term but, the Power, through Beck, McGannon and Motton applied pressure and cleverly set up Stephenson for his second major. The margin was twenty-eight points at the last change but even the most optimistic Power supporter would have struggled to have any hope of a Power revival in the last quarter.

The last term would best be forgotten by both sides as the standard of football was ordinary at best. It was situation normal for the Power, missed sitters, turnover “gifts” for the Cannons and more missed opportunities by the Power. The only positive for the Power came when Fleming and Drew combined to set up Reid for a goal to reduce the embarrassment somewhat. However, the Power then missed four more gettable goals in the dying moments and allowed the Cannons to win by thirty-two points and, importantly, their first win for the 2017 season.

Final scores, Calder Cannons 18 goals 9 behinds 117 points defeated engie Gippsland Power 12 goals 13 behinds 85 points. Goal kickers; Aidan Quigley 3, Will Stephenson 2, Irving Mosquito, Cody Henness, Callum Porter, Kim Drew, Sean Masterson, Kyle Reid and Boadie Motton 1 each.

In a match where some leadership was much needed, captain, Aidan Quigley set a fine example in all the key aspects of the game. He amassed many possessions, often contested, and applied nine fierce tackles in the tight situations. He capped off a fine game with three vital goals when his side needed them most. His determination and work ethic was matched by Callum Porter who was at his no-nonsense best. Callum is renowned for winning and effectively using contested possessions and again did so to telling effect. His ten plus tackles reflected the other component of his trademark hardness in a typically unselfish game.

Despite his relative inexperience in this elite competition, Kim Drew has quickly demonstrated that he has the work ethic and skills to be vital member of the Power on field unit. He too is at his best in contests and won nearly thirty possessions and well as applying pressure with hard tackles. Young back man Grady Cocksedge had a tough task on difficult opponents. He responded manfully to the challenge and had the discipline to play consistently tight defence. He added to his impact by having the confidence and skill to win and effectively use many possessions.

Matt McGannon is renowned for his versatility and once again was able to play a key role in a variety of positions. He won and effectively used the ball as well as applying many important tackles. When in defence he had the discipline to minimise the impact of his opponents by having six vital spoils in aerial contests. Youngster, Bailey Beck, is another who has quickly adapted to the tempo of TAC Cup football. He also applies pressure in contests and is beginning to have the confidence to back his judgement when he wins contested possessions. The added bonus he provides is the ability to play in a variety of positions.

The Power takes on the Northern Knights at Morwell next Saturday. On paper this is definitely a winnable game. However, the result will very much depend on which Power team takes the field. If it is the highly inefficient team that was defeated by the Cannons then things look grim. On the other hand, if the side that was so focussed when they beat the Dragons turns up, then it’s definitely game on.

Adding to the optimism for the Power is the fact that Julian Patterson should be available and, injured players Nick Hogan, Jack Hudson and Austin Hodge cold also return. Either way, Leigh and his assistants will work hard with the boys to get their positive focus back as they have the belief in their ability to respond to such a challenge despite being off the mark so badly last week.