Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

Theoretically, engie Gippsland Power’s task in taking on the TAC Cup’s top side, the Geelong Falcons at Colac was mission impossible for the most positive of supporters. The Falcons were undefeated, had several of the competition’s best players and the Power still had an extensive injury list that robbed them of vitally important players. Going into this crucial match, the Power had youngsters Bailey Beck and Irving Mosquito back after a week off and, importantly, regained key forward Austin Hodge after a niggling ankle injury.

Despite being able to be competitive for the majority of time in all their games so far this season, the Power had only managed two wins and needed to be totally on-task against a quality side like the Falcons if they had any chance of causing such a huge shock result. Things became even more doubtful before the game when Hodge withdrew late due to another minor injury.

Those looking at the final result of the match would have naturally thought that the Power had recorded a very narrow victory but, closer analysis showed that the margin didn’t reflect the degree to which the Power controlled the game. Even further in-depth scrutiny showed that if they had converted their second-half opportunities better, they would have won by at least five goals or even more with a little luck. They played stunning team football all day and deserved to have recorded a much bigger win than the scoreboard reflected.

The match opened with the Power applying their trademark brand of intense, pressure football all over the ground and forced the Falcons to struggle to get their running game going. Almost against the run of general play, the Falcons scored the initial goal with the benefit of a dubious free kick. Some long kicking by Irving Mosquito enabled Callum Porter to take a strong contested mark and he kicked the vital reply for the side.

Despite the fact that the Power were working so hard in contests, the Falcons kicked another on the rebound but the Power were far from intimidated by it. Good work from Julian Patterson and Aidan Quigley set up Mosquito to snap truly and then great vision and skill by Xavier Duursma resulted in Bailey Beck kicking a fine goal. By the first change the Power had a nine point led and had been highly competitive for the whole quarter.

It was obvious that the Falcons wouldn’t be overawed by the Power and they easily scored the opening goal on the rebound after a Power turnover. To add insult to injury, the Power then wasted three very gettable scoring opportunities. On baller Jack Hudson found Will Stephenson who then linked up with Porter who kicked his second. Not to be outdone, Porter then won a stunning free kick with his trademark hardness and converted truly. After some more great pressure, Duursma was able to kick truly and the Power deservedly found themselves four goals up at the long break.

In the opening moments of the third term, the Power applied more intense pressure up forward through Mosquito and Stephenson and Kyle Reid took full advantage of their hard work. Once again the Power wasted hard-won scoring opportunities and the Falcons again kicked a vital goal on the rebound from such a wasted forward thrust. Defender, Travis Bindley set up an attacking move with a long kick and then Sean Masterson and Reid combined to allow Porter to take another contested mark and then kick is fourth for the match.

Against the run of play the Falcons scored the last of the term and returned the Power’s lead to four goals at the last change. Leigh and his assistants had plenty of positives to focus on but the poor finishing was still and issue as the Power had only managed two goals from their sixteen fifty entries. The match should have been beyond dispute already, as the Power had dominated the contested issues and should have been at least six goals up based on their intense work ethic.

The early minutes of the last term followed a regular pattern with the Falcons kicking an easy goal and the Power responding with four points from very easy scoring opportunities. Brilliant Power forward Mosquito went off the ground injured and the Falcons hit back with a great snap from deep in the pocket. It took a long and direct forward thrust to enable Tom Fleming to mark well and then kick a crucial goal for the side.

In the last moments of the match, the Falcons scored three more goals to reduce the margin the one kick. On the final siren the margin was five points but, even the strongest Falcon’s supporters wouldn’t have claimed that they deserved such a victory. Considering the fact that the Power had lost three games in such circumstances already this season, it would have been heartbreaking to lose again after dominating the match for so much of the time.

Any analysis of the key statistics supported this fact with the most obvious being the number of scoring shots that each side had. The Power had ten more such opportunities than the Falcons and with a fifty-fifty conversion rate would have won by at least five goals. More detailed review showed that in the first half they kicked six goals from twenty-six forward fifty entries while they only managed three from twenty-seven chances in the second half.

Despite putting such unnecessary scoreboard pressure upon themselves, there were still plenty of wonderful positives to recognise with such a great victory against a quality side. The most obvious was the club’s most admired trademark of applying intense pressure in contests and it stopped the Falcons being able to get their normal game going.

The next strength was the dominance of the midfield unit with Julian Patterson and Will Broadbent winning most hit outs and on-ballers and midfielders Xavier Duursma, Aidan Quigley, Will Stephenson, Bailey Beck, Callum Porter and Kim Drew either winning the clearance or applying such intense pressure that the Falcons couldn’t win many such contests.

Final scores engie Gippsland Power 9 goals 16 behinds 70 points defeated Geelong Falcons 10 goals 5 behinds 65 points. Goal kickers, Callum Porter 4, Xavier Duursma, Bailey Beck, Irving Mosquito, Kyle Reid and Tom Fleming 1.

Callum Porter is deservedly respected as one of the club’s strongest ever on-ballers and e demonstrated why with a stunning performance. With over thirty possessions, mostly contested, nine strong marks and his usual abundant number of tackles he dominated the match. However his four goals gave his performance even greater credence. Bottom-age midfielder, Xavier Duursma, upped the ante even further in his second season with an all-round game. He won many contested possessions, took strong, intercept marks, soundly defeated dangerous opponents and initiated many positive attacking moves by backing his pace and skills to a critical level.

Despite having extended spells on the bench in preparation for up-coming state duties, captain, Aidan Quigley made a huge impact on the result. He had over twenty vital possessions and worked even harder to ensure that they were used effectively. His ability to tackle hard in tight contests was also a critical factor in the team’s performance. Lively on-baller, Will Stephenson was at his best in another fine all-round performance. He won over twenty contested possessions used his pace and skill to use the ball effectively. He completed his contribution with ten typically crunching tackles in the tightest situations all over the field.

Defender Matt McGannon has the skills and pace to be an attacking player but also relishes the opportunity to be defensive. He totally blitzed dangerous opponents in the air or at ground level and then had the confidence to create many positive attacking moves with his ability to use lengthy disposals to telling effect. Utility, Tom Fleming was given a tough task in defence and applied himself manfully to the task. When the side needed strength up forward he again responded positively to the challenge. His no-nonsense approach enabled his to kick the goal that secured the side’s victory.

The Power now has another bye with the first round of the national under eighteen championships in Sydney. Many of the squad will be able to return to their local clubs although there are some players who will be rested due to an intense work rate already this season. The time off should give several players the chance to remove their names from the injury list and key players like Tyrone Hayes, Callan McKeon, Nick Hogan and Austin Hodge should be very close to selection. Cody Henness will return from state duties and longer term injured players, Will Leslie and Kieran Jones will be much nearer to the “availables” for the selectors as well.

Round ten of the TAC Cup will see the Power take on Greater Western Victoria at Casey Fields. On paper this appears to be a “winnable” game for the side but closer analysis of the Power’s form indicates that they have the ability to play much better than their ladder position indicates. Their performances against the Sandringham Dragons and Geelong Falcons reflect real quality but, and it’s a huge but, they must not waste the chances to have the scoreboard represent their commitment to get the ball in dangerous positions.