Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

Any analysis of engie Gippsland Power’s 2017 TAC Cup season would provide plenty of positives to highlight despite having lost at least four games by under one goal. Deeper scrutiny would show stunning wins against two of the top three sides that required committed application of the team’s game plan based on it’s trademark ability to put opposing sides under consistent and intense pressure all over the ground.

The match against the Oakleigh Chargers was a challenge that required more of this work ethic as they were a top three side and the Power knew full well that they couldn’t afford to underestimate them. At the end of the game, the fact that the Chargers won by one hundred and one points and totally blitzed the Power, can be explained by one of two possibilities.

The first, and most obvious, was that the Chargers were the best side that the Power had met so far this season and that they had the game plan to overcome the Power’s competitive intensity and exploit any tactical or skill errors with clinical efficiency. The second, and far less acceptable, alternative was that the Power didn’t have the desire to meet the challenges that the Chargers were capable of issuing.

Statistically, the fact that the Power only scored three goals for the match and, even worse, couldn’t kick any goals for entire second half would promote option two as the explanation of the side’s worse defeat for two seasons. However, this would totally under-estimate the stunning performance by the Chargers and the skill and commitment that they used to consistently create easy scoring opportunities with the best rebound football the Power had experienced for many years.

Thankfully for the boys; Leigh didn’t think that they were that slack and took quality time at the end of the match to focus on who did well and , importantly, what they had to work on to be able to meet the challenges coming up in the rest of the season. He and his coaching panel has always had faith in their ability and work ethic and will use the rest of the season to ensure that they quickly move on from this “hiccup” and get back to the form that has been so strong for much of the season so far.

If the boys were unsure about what faced them in the game, the opening minutes of the first quarter was a stark indication. They were forced to waste early forward forays by the Chargers and then saw them clinically exploit every chance that they created with shilled rebound football. They had two goals before the Power broke through with more direct and purposeful play from Will Leslie, Boadie Motton and Austin Hodge to give Jack Hudson the chance to finally put his side on the board.

However, this was a mere glitch in the Charger’s game plan as they kicked three more seeming simple goals with the precise movement of the ball from defence to attack in such a way that the Power defenders had little or no chance to stem the torrent of attacking moves that they faced. By the end of the quarter the Chargers led by twenty five points but had served notice that they were ready to commit mayhem at every opportunity.

If the first term hadn’t raised real concerns for the Power, then the opening of the second quarter would firmly indicate just how potent the Chargers commitment to their game plan was. They scored three more rebound goals after Power turnovers and were able to switch play to telling effect. It took Callum Porter to go quick, long and direct into attack to give Hudson the chance to earn a free kick which he gratefully converted for the Power’s second goal.

It didn’t take long for the Chargers to get back in control and they scored another clinical goal before the Power through Hodge and Will Stephenson were able to set up Kyle Reid for what would be the side’s last goal for the match. Although the Charger’s lead was now thirty six points, the Power had played better football for much of the term and had minimised the number of unnecessary turnovers, especially when going into attack.

Once again it was the Chargers who were in control at the start of the third quarter and they had two goals on the board quickly. The Power, in direct contrast, began to waste their hard-won opportunities but at least limited the Chargers scoring options. As if on cue, the Chargers regained their composure and kicked two more simple gaols to further extend their lead to sixty three points by the end of the quarter.

If the third term was disappointing for the Power, then the last was to be the one that really indicated just how much better the Chargers were. They were able to kick six more goals with their commitment to moving the ball quickly and with stunning accuracy. Each time they won the ball, their players spread wide with electrifying speed and they redirected play through men who seemed to lose their opponents with consummate ease.

By the end of the match the margin was one hundred and one points and the Power had plenty of things to focus on after being so ruthlessly defeated by the Chargers. Fortunately the national championships provide a bye that will give key players the chance to rest and some more of those on the injury list to return and give the side vital experience and skills.

Final score, Oakleigh Chargers nineteen goals 13 behinds 127 points defeated engie Gippsland Power 3 goals 8 behinds 26 points. Goal kickers, Jack Hudson 2 and Kyle Reid 1.

From the start of the match the Power defence were under the sort of intense pressure that they hadn’t seen all season. Youngster Bailey Patterson put himself in the middle of the toughest contests and worked tirelessly to minimise the impact of his direct opponents as well as assisting team mates whenever possible. His strength of mind and endeavour was exceptional in the toughest match he has ever played. Fellow youngster Boadie Motton is another whose movement up the TAC Cup learning curve has been very rapid and extremely efficient. He plays committed team football in any position and has the speed, skill and courage to win and quickly use the ball to telling effect. He stood out in the tightest contests and was able to stem many potentially dangerous Chargers attacks.

Another defender who was highly effective was Will Leslie who was back to the sort of form that made him such a dominant player in last season’s run of victories. His pace, aerial skills and ability to kick long and direct are a rare combination for some one of his height and his return after a niggling injury will be vital for the rest of the year. Midfielder Kim Drew is another who has made stunning progress in this elite competition. His ability to apply intense pressure on opponents as well as win, and effectively use the ball in the tightest contests makes his a key member of the on-ball brigade.

Austin Hodge is another key player who has returned from injury and was back to his best in the thick of the action. He responded to the challenge of joining the mid-field unit and was able to apply intense pressure in each contest he put himself into. Late in the game he moved into defence and again was effective in many contests. Grady Cocksedge joined fellow rookies Bailey and Boadie to demonstrate how quickly and effectively he has adjusted to the standard of football in the TAC Cup. He was at his disciplined and team oriented best in the middle of many of the Chargers attacking moves and made the right decision in most contests.

For most sides, such a defeat would be soul destroying but Leigh will ensure that the boys have a positive mind set as he challenges them to remain competitive for the games in the rest of the season. The match against the Sandringham Dragons at Casey Fields is the ideal situation for him to get them to focus on and they will be eager to back his faith in them.