**Round 16 Match Report**

**By Kate Mitchell**

Gippsland Power have kept their TAC Cup finals chances alive with a hard-fought 17-point win against a full-strength Bendigo Pioneers.

All six country teams converged on Ballarat for a triple header of TAC Cup football. Mars stadium was in pristine condition after hosting an AFL match the day before.

Before the game Coach Leigh Brown asked his top aged players to lift, they responded and put the pressure on the Pioneers early. Nick Hogan led the way in the first quarter, his chase and pressure creating goals for his team mates.

Kyle Reid returned to the Power line up, proving a handful for the Pioneers defenders with two early contested marks and goals. Reid was poised to have a big day out, but a corked thigh ended his day early.

Power went into the first break with a 10-point lead after controlling the game through the middle. The Pioneers then gained the momentum in the second quarter, getting on top in the clearances and inside 50’s. Their inability to capitalise on the scoreboard helped Power retain a 16-point lead. Pioneers kicked 1 goal 7 while up the other end Jack Hudson, Irving Mosquito and Will Stephenson were all impacting the scoreboard.

The Pioneers came out firing after half time, kicking the first three goals of the third quarter. Power lifted their defensive pressure across the ground through the likes of Liam Carroll, Boadie Motton and Callum Porter but they still trailed going into the final break.

Coach Brown implored his players for one more big effort, with both Reid and Will Leslie succumbing to injury the team needed to dig deep to run out the game two players down.

Power started the final quarter with two goals in two minutes. From there it went goal for goal in a great display of high quality TAC Cup football. The Pioneers just wouldn’t go away, reducing the deficit to just four points.

With three games being played in the one day each quarter was set at 25 minutes flat. It led to the unique situation of knowing exactly when the siren would go and a thrilling final five minutes.

Power maintained their pressure and run but when Hudson kicked a point it gave the Pioneers an opportunity to gain clear possession. A shanked kick in landed straight on Hudson’s chest, he punished the turnover with a goal that broke the spirit of the Pioneers players. Captain Aidan Quigley then sealed the win kicking a goal with under a minute remaining.

Power now face a resurgent Western Jets at home on Saturday 26th September. The Jets, led by potential number one draft pick Cam Rayner are coming off a strong win and will be battling with Power for the remaining position in the eight.

Gippsland Power 3.4 6.5 7.7 13.11 (89)  
Bendigo Pioneers 2.0 3.7 7.10 10.12 (72)

GOALS: Jack Hudson 3, Kyle Reid 2, Aidan Quigley 2, Irving Mosquito 2, Will Stephenson 1, Nick Lowden 1, Rylan Henkel 1, Nick Hogan 1

BEST: Callum Porter, Nick Hogan, Jack Hudson, Boadie Motton, Caleb Serong, Liam Carroll