Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

The 2017 TAC Cup season for engie Gippsland Power came to an abrupt end at Mars stadium in Ballarat after they were outclassed by the Geelong Falcons. After being in good form in recent weeks, the Power had many positives to build on for such a challenge but couldn’t maintain the sort of effective football necessary to defeat a side of the Falcon’s quality.

Some of the positives were the fact that they had arguably their best side available for the season with the return of Callan McKeon, Nick Lowden, Cody Henness and Matt McGannon and had already beaten the Falcons earlier in the season. Unfortunately they had lost one of their under sixteen tyros in Sam Flanders and then had to replace Nick Lowden with Tom Murray just before the game after he went down with the flu.

In ideal conditions at the redeveloped stadium, the Power started well when McGannon, Nick Hogan and Will Stephenson applied the side’s traditionally intense pressure and Irving Mosquito took a spectacular ark and then kicked the game’s first goal. Ominously, from the resultant centre bounce, the Falcons scored a simple reply with the Power making little or no impact on that passage of play.

Not to be outdone, the Power hit back with CJ Jiath applying great pressure to create a chance for Stephenson to kick a vital goal. The Falcons then took advantage of a very “iffy” umpiring decision and then extended their lead with another relatively easy goal. The Falcons had the momentum for much of the rest of the quarter and were able to kick another goal courtesy of an unnecessary turnover by the Power.

It took some strong work in a tight contest by Jack Hudson to set up Xavier Duursma for a free kick which he converted to a vital goal for his team. By the first break, the Falcons had an eleven point lead but the signs for the Power didn’t look good when an analysis of the ease with which they scored their goals was done. Leigh and his assistants had the usual strengths of the Power based on determination and hardness to be positive about but the problems were going to be markedly obvious for the rest of the match.

The next three quarters were basically the same, the Power couldn’t score another goal despite many entries into their forward area while the Falcons systematically exploited turnovers to a stunning degree. The Power continued to apply their trademark intense pressure all over the field but, once going up forward, their finishing was ineffective and resulted in the turnovers that the Falcons so well.

This was the pattern of play for the Power early in the season and had cost them at least five wins. As the year progressed, they worked hard to minimise these errors and began to realise the potential that Leigh and his assistants had so much faith in. Unfortunately, their opponents in this match had taken their game to another level and had a game plan that never allowed the Power a chance to use their work ethic to make an impact on the scoreboard.

In the second and third quarters the Power worked very hard to limit the Falcons to three goals but, because of the inability to kick them themselves, the scoreboard presented a picture that didn’t accurately reflect the quality of their efforts. In the last term the errors increased and the Falcons scored six goals with stunningly effective rebound football. By the final siren the margin was eighty five points but few who watched the match would agree that it reflected the way in which the boys maintained their effort and, more importantly, their intent.

Final scores, Geelong Falcons 16 goals 11 behinds 107 points defeated engie Gippsland Power 3 goals 4 behinds 22 points. Goal kickers, Xavier Duursma, Will Stephenson and Irving Mosquito 1.

In a match when the ball went into the Power defence quickly and with precision, the Power midfield was under intense pressure. Young wingman, Bailey Beck made a huge impact on the contests he put himself into. With a combination of his pace, aerial skills and hardness in tight situations he intercepted many of these passages of play and then had the confidence to use the ball with clinical efficiency. His twenty possessions, seven marks and eleven tackles give some indication of how hard he worked.

Another who made a huge contribution in these passages of play was defender Will Leslie. His athleticism and ability to kick the ball with penetration enabled him to minimise the impact of dangerous opponents and then use the hard won ball effectively. He too had twenty possessions and took many strong contested marks with the sort of form that was vital in the latter part of the season when he returned from a nagging injury.

Captain, Aidan Quigley was assigned vital roles in taking on and nullifying the contribution of the Falcons best players. His unselfishness and disciplined defensive work was matched by his willingness to use his many possessions to generate positive passages of play for his team. As a consequence, he set the perfect example for his team mates again and accurately reflected why he has been such a strong leader all season.

Matching fellow youngster Bailey Beck, Xavier Duursma belied his age to play a vital role across the mid field as well as in defence. His aerial skills, ability to read the play and hardness in intense contests meant that he rarely conceded an easy possession. As well as being so strong defensively, he generated many attacking passages of play by backing himself to win the ball and then run to have time and space to use it well.

In many matches this season, Will Stephenson has been an influential member of the side’s renowned mid field unit. He too was able to win his customary number of contested possessions as well as applying his strength to tackle opponents hard and win the ball as a consequence. As vice-captain, he too has led by stellar example, and thrived the responsibility that this level of leadership entails.

Key defender, Sean Masterson, has been able to have a huge impact all season with his ability to take on and defeat the opposition’s most dangerous tall forwards. In the tightest contests in this game, he took many intercept marks and then worked hard to make sure that he used the ball effectively. He too has thrived in a leadership role and has given younger team mates the confidence to back their judgement and skills in intense situations.

At the end of the match Leigh spoke positively to the boys and highlighted the fact that the scoreboard didn’t reflect the effort and determination that they demonstrated in this match and throughout the season. It was yet another example of the faith that he has consistently had in the boy’s ability and quality as young men. It has resulted them in becoming a highly competitive team in this elite competition as well as fine individuals on and off the field.