CALDER CANNONS v BENDIGO PIONEERS 12TH MAY

Falling in the middle of a nice stretch of home games, this round 6 clash was vitally important to square the season ledger and gain some momentum coming out of the second bye of the season.

The late afternoon bounce was a soppy one, as bursts of rain soaked RAMS Arena for the majority of the afternoon leading up to the commencement of the game. Rain continued to fall intermittently throughout the first quarter and kicking with a slight breeze to the right of screen, the boys managed adapt to the conditions faster.

Getting on the board with to early first quarter goals with thanks to Mitch Podhajski, freshly returned from a stint in the VFL with Coburg FC and big man Ned Gentile who read the pack well and collected the crumbs in front of goal.

The pace was really taken out of the game in the second quarter, with a heavy ball and the elements effecting skill, there was a twenty minute lull in goals for either team, which was broken by the visitors but quickly rebutted by Nathan Croft, who had a stellar first half. There was only two straight kicks separating the two teams at half time.

Podjhaski and Jack Evans were outstanding in the first half, alongside Nathan Croft, who kicked our only goal of the second quarter, whilst amassing 10 touches of his own.

As the final natural light dispersed and the second half began the game looked entirely different to the 50 minutes proceeding it – the game had opened up extravagantly as tired legs began to show.

But the Cannons were finally getting some reward for effort as their domination of the inside 50 count began to reflect on the scoreboard as we kicked six goals to one in a dominant premiership quarter display.

Possessions were shared around the ground evenly in the second half as 14 players had over 10 touches of the pigskin at the last break.

The last quarter strongly resembled the second and the game began to tighten up again, with skills starting to deteriorate and decision making less and less prominent, with two opposition players being pulled aside by the umpires to discuss a series of poor decisions.

**KEY PLAYERS**In a game with so many great individual performers, it was a hard task to narrow down who had the most influence on the outcome of the game. **Mitch Podhajski** did not miss a beat in his return to the TAC Cup and tackled everything in sight. He finished the game with an extremely impressive stat-line: 24 possessions, 7 marks, 11 tackles and 2 goals.
**Izzy Moussa** was critical to the result as his run and dash broke open the game when it became stagnant, whilst providing a strong running option as the outlet kick for the under siege defenders he was everywhere on the night and collected 22 possessions.
**Nathan Croft** may not have had the most possessions on the ground, but his endeavour was awe-inspiring for the majority of the contest. In conditions built especially for him, he was like a rabid dog and applied pressure at every contest.
**Jack Evans** notched up another impressive game in what has been one of the more consistent seasons amongst the boys list, his leadership shining through for the majority of the game and set the tone early.
**Hanna** was also brilliant, extremely clean in wet conditions and super smooth around his feet whilst collecting 25 touches.