GIPPSLAND POWER MEDIA RELEASE

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An analysis of the challenge facing engie Gippsland Power in their match against the Bendigo Pioneers would have presented a deserved level of optimism for the local boys. Respective ladder positions were the obvious factor to be positive as the Power were placed second while the Pioneers were on the bottom after recording just one win for the 2018 season so far.

Complicating what appeared to be a natural assumption in favour of the Power was the fact that both sides were without their best players due to national championship commitments. It was a realistic concern for the Power as, in their previous match, the Power were lucky to record a draw against the Calder Cannons when comparison of their respective ladder positions indicated that the Power should have won the game.

As a consequence of these complications, the Power made six changes to the team with, state squad member, Irving Mosquito and Brett Thorson back from minor injury concerns and youngster Zac Skinner recalled as well. An added bonus was the opportunity to select debutants Jack Hume, Tremaine Howard and Marcus Toussaint and, overall, it meant that the Power had twelve of their highly regarded bottom-age in the team.

Scott McDougal, Leigh’s assistant coach, was in command due to Leigh’s state team involvement and he was well aware of the fact that the on-paper scenario was not going to matter once the match started. The boys had been made aware of the need to maintain their focus on basic team rules by Scott and, more importantly, by the way that the Calder Cannons had so cleverly exploited any deviation from adherence to the team plan.

Early in the match, the Power were seemingly in control of much of the play but were struggling to put scores on the board. It took a more direct approach by Bailey Patterson to allow Leongathas’ Jack Hume to mark well and goal with his first kick in the TAC Cup. Some trademark Power pressure was finished off by Trent Baldi when he goaled from what appeared to be a hopeless situation.

The Pioneers regrouped and stemmed the flow of Power forward thrusts and once again, some more forward pressure by Brock Smith resulted in a well-deserved free kick which he converted accurately. Instead of building on this momentum, the Power midfield began to get lazy and, but for inaccuracy, would have allowed the Pioneers to get back into the match. By the first change the Power led by an unconvincing sixteen points and needed to refocus if they were to maintain their lead.

This fact was rammed home by the Pioneers when they scored an easy goal at the start of the second term and then the Power wasted very gettable opportunities when they went into attack. It wasn’t until the seventeen minute mark that the Power scored another goal when Irving Mosquito and Austin Hodge cleverly combined to allow Marcus Toussaint to kick his first goal. Some more direct play resulted in Hume roving cleverly off the pack and the Power were almost five goals up late in the quarter.

Instead of continuing to build on this, the Power again let the Pioneers regain the initiative and they kicked two easy goals in the last minutes of the term. Going into the long break, the Power led by ten points but had been punished for being wasteful when in attack but, really exploited, by the Pioneers for not applying enough effective pressure in the midfield. The coach had an obvious issue to address and seemingly had the quality players who were capable of making a difference.

It was like a “deja-vu” moment when the Power wasted more forward opportunities and then added insult to injury to “gift” the Pioneers with a goal due to more slackness in the midfield. The Power were back to their worst from 2017 when the wasted forward fifty entries and then got consistently punished after the unnecessary turnover. It took a fine contested mark by Toussaint on the fourteen minute mark to break the Power drought but things then got worse rather than better as the quarter progressed.

The Pioneers kicked two more goals on the rebound while the Power were dreadful in attack and, consequently, the Pioneers were three points up at the end of the quarter. The Power had gone into their forward fifty zone twelve times during the quarter but had only scored one goal. This statistic in a terrible sign for any team as one goal per four entries is seen as being appropriate in any competition.

If things were looking grim for the Power at the end of the term, then they were disastrous mid-way through the last quarter when the Pioneers had two more goals after the Power had wasted even more chances to regain the momentum and rebuild their control of the match. A now, rare, direct forward thrust from Patterson allowed Josh Smith to mark and goal but once again the Pioneers were allowed to kick two more easy goals to run out winners by twenty points.

By the end of the second half the Power had kicked two goals from twenty five forward fifty entries and this alone could be used to explain to the end result. However, what was even more influential than this ineffectiveness was the fact that the Pioneers could go into attack with so little pressure around the midfield area. This, traditionally, has been the Power’s strength area for many seasons but, in recent weeks, the defensive pressure has been almost non-existent rather than just a minor problem.

The Power now has a week off due to the national championships and will be given plenty of “encouragement” to address these issues and get back to the sort of efficient football that had been so impressive early in the season. It’s not rocket science in terms of the difficulty to address the key issues but, the boys will need to be totally team-focused if they are going to play a significant part in the end of the season action.

Final scores, Bendigo Pioneers 10 goals 10 behinds 70 points defeated engie Gippsland Power 7 goals 8 behinds 50 points. Goal kickers, Jack Hume and Marcus Toussaint 2, Brock Smith, Josh Smith and Trent Baldi 1.

When the ball was coming into the Pioneer’s attacking area with so little pressure, the Power defence was under extreme pressure. Veteran, Tyrone Hayes responded to the challenge magnificently to shut opponents out of the game but, far more importantly, win thirty possessions himself. What made his contribution even more significant was the fact that he backed his judgement to break free and run to set up attacking passages of play. Fellow defender, Tye Hourigan continued his impressive progress in this elite competition as he took on and soundly quelled the impact of the Pioneers best key forwards. His disciplined and determined play allowed him to win a significant number of possessions, take six contested marks, apply five tackles and nine spoils in another impressive, all-round performance.

Rookie, Jack Hume, has been playing senior football with Leongatha and quickly demonstrated why he has achieved this at such a young age. He was highly competitive in aerial contests, read the play like a veteran and picked up important possessions at ground level. He looks ready to play a vital role as a forward for the rest of the season. As with Tyrone and Tye, defender Bailey Patterson was able to manfully respond to the challenge due to the ease with which the Pioneers were going into attack. He too held dangerous opponents but had the skill, confidence and focus to win and effectively use twenty five possessions.

Once again, one of the most important players for Power was Boadie Motton who was at his highly competitive best in the thick of the action. His ability to sacrifice his personal safety as an on-baller for the team was reflected by his twenty five, mostly contested possessions, five marks and five tackles. Noah Gown is another senior player who is thriving on the responsibility of being a vital key forward as well as being able to be highly effective as a ruckman. He won almost twenty possessions due to a combination of his aerial skills and ability to apply intense pressure in contests at ground level.