



A Victory For The True Believers

OK, lets recap those Women's Footy stats- OFC finished in fourth place on the ladder with more losses than wins. The team in third place, Pakenham, beat us twice during the season while leading club Healesville had a 3-zip record against us.

How could this young Red and White team go on to win the Flag ? How indeed !



Off to the races- Pakenham had no answer to OFC's strong "running game"

Sacha Sullivan has generously covered the women's season for us, and for local media, during the year. In our humble estimation this is his best piece yet-

Olinda Women's team cemented their place in history with a jubilant 43 point victory over Pakenham in front of a packed house at Healesville on Sunday.

For those that have followed Olinda's progress through the season, the unlikely victory was all the more meritorious. Olinda beat every team during the year but also lost to every team with the exception of bottom placed Monbulk. Olinda had disappointingly lost to Pakenham twice in the

home and away. Olinda faced Berwick Springs, a team they had capitulated to 2 weeks previously, in round 14 in a cut-throat clash, with the winner to scrape into the last place in the final 4.

Olinda faced the undefeated Healesville on their home deck in the Preliminary Final, beating the unbackable flag favourites by 4 points. Olinda did not have their full side once in the entire season, with key personnel missing large chunks of time.



A fit and firing Chelsea Wilson is one of the keys to OFC's success.

Olinda lost 14 players at the start of the year, including Captain and dual best and fairest winner Maddi Collins and leading goal kicker Phoebe Dixon. Olinda's list of 25 was heavily represented with under age players, with 14 U18s in the side, the youngest aged just 14. Olinda held several soul searching sessions during the season as they struggled to

find synergy with such a massive influx of new players.

All the elements added up to what was a fairytale victory and the culmination of 3 years of toil and effort by a host of people past and present, on and off the field.

Half the Mountain were at the game and celebrated with the girls well into the morning. The feat of these pioneering girls in making their small community happy and proud should never be underestimated.

The game itself was an enjoyable spectacle in front of a vocal, energetic crowd. Olinda burst out of the blocks with 2 first quarter goals to first year Blood Olivia (The Weapon!) Edwards, and were never seriously threatened from that point. Liv has been a revelation in the team, has been the leading goal kicker and the forward line General all season. Liv was instrumental in shaping what is surely the most talent laden forward line in the Competition. Liv ended up with 4 goals for the game, her 3rd and 4th spectacular highlights and a fitting example of her talents. Her 3rd goal at the start of the 3rd quarter was spectacular, and the comical result of a Pakenham kick 35m into Olinda's forward line. Liv burned off her opponent, shot past another, and sprinted into the open goal in front of the parochial Olinda supporters. A great moment! As usual, Liv's handprints were on most of the other goals kicked, and it was a near perfect game. Liv would surely have taken the best on ground medal home if it wasn't for the presence of....

Grace (The Ace) Belloni. There have been great AFL finals performers over the years, Gary Ablett in '89, Michael Long in '93, and Dusty Martin in '17. Add Grace Belloni '23 to that list because her performance in this finals series has been nothing short of awe-inspiring. From Grace's game winning run and goal in the Preliminary Final upset win against Healesville, to her 4 goal dominant game in the Grand Final, Grace could not have done more for the team. Grace's game had everything, goals, assists, high marks, bullet handballs and crunching tackles. Grace is one of Olinda's famed Young Bloods, and there is little doubt you will be seeing her name again.



Grace, speed and power- another unstoppable Grace Belloni clearance.

Another first year Blood Lucy (Goose) Hilton has made an enormous difference to the DNA of the side, and she brings with her an immeasurable quality, grit. Lucy's Grand Final

was typical in and under ball extraction and brutal blocks, bumps and tackles. Luce is an excellent outside player too, with her overhead marking and ball use a highlight.



Lucy Hilton- a 2023 revelation. Issy Dennis is on the move in the background.

Miss Football Lily (Laser) Carlin and Kyah (The Missile) Barry are prototypes of the way Olinda Women's play, and want to play in the future. Fast, hard running, precision ball use and fierce tackling.

Kyah's signature run-down tackles in the first quarter set the tone for the contest, and her run and carry all game was incredibly influential.

Lily's running goal in the last quarter, her first for the year, was the game's biggest highlight in front of Olinda's

rapturous supporters.

When using the word “influence”, you cannot leave out the name Chelsea (Big Kahuna) Wilson. Everything good Olinda does on the field starts with Chelse, and she is easily the League’s best Ruck. Chelsea’s Grand Final was another customary dominant display.

Leah (The Lion) Cody was incredibly valuable in the first half before leaving the ground with a dislocated finger. It seemed every Pakenham foray forward was being marked by Leah, and her performance really took the sting out Pakenham’s chances of creating scoreboard pressure.

Emmalee (Bruce) Keegan had enormous impact in her time on field, her speed, strength and game sense outstanding.

Chloe (The Smiling Assassin) Kanally continues to amaze with her attack on each contest, and she is only bettered by her captain in her fearlessness,

Amalija (Marzie) Kostich-Angerson continued to get better after a long lay off, and her ability to get the ball and deny her opponents the same is exceptional.

Heckle & Jeckle (DJ) Ness Curnow (nee Bateman) and Ruby (Barb) Gilson had great games forward. Ruby was involved in a sickening head clash with her Pakenham opponent in the second quarter in which the Pakky player lost a tooth. All at the ground were relieved when Rubes walked from the ground and to her immense credit, rejoined the fray in the last quarter.

Special mention must go to Olinda’s backs, brilliantly led by Casey (The Vault) Seymour. Case, Paige (The Rage) Robinson and Anna (Goanna) Hughson, had excellent seasons and

Finals, and will be feared by opposition forwards for years to come.



Thank you to the hundreds of Hills people who travelled to Healesville for the match- as we saw with the A Grade netball last year we just love our community sport

Coaching savant Brendan Donovan has said that winning finals is all about “moments”. All Olinda players including Tobi Monkhorst, sisters Laura & Celia Clarke, Kaesha Christie, Jacjie Ring, and Issy Dennis all had great moments and were instrumental in the miraculous victory.

Saving the best for last, Captain Courageous Claire Hyett, Olinda’s inspirational leader. Claire fights every game to the death, and puts her small frame in dangerous places with little regard for her own safety. Claire copped a hard tag from one of Pakenham’s best players, and true to character, it merely elevated her game, and she was clearly in Olinda’s best. Off the field, she is an inspirational leader not just of her team, but her Club and Community. It could not be

more fitting that the final siren sounded with the ball in Claire's hands, and the sight of Captain Courageous holding the cup aloft on the dais will be an enduring image for decades to come.

Congratulations to the team, Coach Simon Gilson and his support group, and the OFCFNC as a whole.

May we celebrate long and hard!



The best possible reward for all the hard work- inspirational skipper Claire Hyett and master coach Simon Gilson with the Premiership Cup.

OFC 9.6.60 Pakenham 2.5.17

**Best Players-Grace Belloni, Olivia Edwards, Lucy Hilton,
Chelsea Wilson, Claire Hyett, Lily Carlin**

Goal Scorers- Olivia Edwards 4, Grace Belloni 4, Lily Carlin 1

**FOOTNOTE- which two players had already won premiership
medallions with OFC ? Casey Seymour and Leah Cody**