GIPPSLAND POWER MEDIA RELEASE

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Initial analysis of the scores of GDF SUEZ Gippsland Power’s foray into the 2015 TAC Cup finals series would have you believe that they were highly uncompetitive throughout the game but nothing would be further from the truth. Yes, they did lose by seventy-six points and this was, by far, their largest losing margin for the season but, for almost three quarters, they were realistically right in the game. The scoreboard was never an accurate reflection of how hard they worked to fulfil their obvious potential and they didn’t deserve to finish the season this way.

They went into the match against the Oakleigh Chargers with their strongest team for the season so far with only Deven Costigan, Sam Skinner and Ryan Hearn out due to long term injury while Tate Marsh was a late withdrawal due to illness. After being highly competitive against the Chargers earlier in the season, the Power had plenty of positives to focus on and Leigh Brown had ensured that the boys had the self-belief needed to face the challenges involved head on.

It was the Chargers who were in attack for the opening minutes of the game but the Power’s respected defensive unit were applying their renowned intense physical pressure to keep their scoring to points rather than goals. Some outstanding forward pressure by the Power on a relatively rare attacking thrust saw Nash Holmes and Ben Ainsworth combine to set up Tom Papley for the game’s opening major score.

Ominously, the Charger utilised a Power turnover to go forward with little pressure and they got an easy reply. The leader of the defence, Christian Bukyx-Smith went long and direct and Ainsworth roved with skill and again it was Papley who finished off the fine play. From the resulting centre bounce, the Chargers were able to get another easy goal and it meant that they went to the first break three points up.

Early in the second quarter, the Chargers were again presented with a soft possession and goal due to another Power turnover due to poor finishing when putting the ball into their forward zone. As the term progressed, the Power began to waste further hard-won scoring opportunities. They either missed gettable goals or, even worse, had turnovers as the result of poor skills and or decisions when going into attack.

For much of the term the damage on the scoreboard from this inefficiency was minimal but late in the quarter the Chargers finally broke free and, as a consequence, went to the long break thirty-three points up. Not even the most biased Chargers supporters would have thought that they had control of the match and Leigh used the break to highlight the fact that they were still in the match but for their sloppy finishing up forward.

His positive focus had an instant impact when the Power went into attack early in the term and once again Papley was in the right spot to capitalise on more effective ball use. Once again the Chargers replied far too easily from the resultant centre bounce but the Power responded perfectly. Due to some great ruckwork by Josh Patullo and delivery from Kade Renooy, Tom Hobbs took a great contested mark and then kicked accurately to put the side back in the match.

As if inspired, Tyler Hillier set up Ainsworth for another goal and suddenly they were putting the ball in the right places at the right times. With the momentum clearly going the Power’s way, Holmes went long and found the irrepressible Papley and he kicked his fourth goal for the match. Another soft centre clearance “gifted” the Chargers with a crucial goal and then, to make things worse, the Power began to waste more chances to get within easy reach of the lead going into the last quarter.

This scenario was made even worse after a seriously dubious umpiring decision again put the Chargers almost back to their half-time led when, in fact, the Power had deserved to be much closer. It had been the Power’s inability to deliver the ball to their forward’s advantage that had been so costly and they needed to finish things of much better for the rest of the match if they were to win the match.

Leigh had obviously refocused the boys on this challenge and they finally had Ben Dessent and Aloysio Ferreira finding Papley for his fifth and seemingly it was game on. What happened next was easily the Power’s worst football for the year as they defended manfully, went into attack poorly and then gifted the Chargers with turnovers and the chance to play rebound football. They kicked nine unanswered goals to capitalise on atrocious finishing by the Power and the resolute defenders had no chance to stem the flow of “gift” goals.

Final scores; Oakleigh Chargers 19 goals 12 behinds 126 points defeated GDF SUEZ Gippsland Power goals 8 behinds 50 points. Tom Papley 5, Ben Ainsworth and Tom Hobbs 1. On a day when the Power forwards were slaughtered by their team-mates awful delivery, the fact that anyone could kick multiple goals was miraculous.

Tom Papley displayed his amazing skills, pace and understanding of the game to stunning effect. He not only finished off some rare good work by others but, far more importantly, created goals from nothing by being in the most dangerous places at the right time for the entire match. Yet again Josh Patullo took on the vast majority of the side’s ruck work and, he not only won the majority of the aerial contests, but was at his busy best when the ball was at ground level. His ability to make sound decisions when using the ball meant that he initiated many positive passages of play.

Todd Beck has been a consistent contributor all season and he strongly responded to whatever challenge Leigh gave him in this critical match. As a defender and later in the midfield, he minimised opponent’s impact as well as winning and effectively using many hard-won possessions himself. When the defenders had any chance to counteract their opponents attacking moves they were lead brilliantly by Christian Bukyx-Smith. He dominated all the one-percenters to stop them getting the ball for the whole game as well as having the skill and confidence to win many of his own highly contested possessions.

Tyler Hillier came into the side late and showed why he had been such a positive contributor in the build-up to the finals series. He was at the base of many tight packs and applied consistent and intense pressure on any unfortunate opponent who tried to win the ball near him. His willingness to put himself into the fiercest contests was matched by Ben Dessent who started out as no-nonsense defender and then, was equally as determined and competitive when moved into the on-ball brigade. His precise disposal skills generated many positive passages of play.

At the end of what was really a terrible way to end a fine season, coach Leigh Brown and Talent Manager Peter Francis focused on the way in which the boys had responded positively to all the physical and mental challenges playing football in the nation’s best junior competition. With eight of the boys involved in the 2015 draft combine processes there is obviously plenty to be pleased about in terms of the club’s development program.

What is even more of a positive to highlight is the fact that the club has a very fine group of bottom-age players around which to build the 2016 side and an even more exciting group of under-sixteen players ready, willing and able to put their stamp on the side next season. The next official function for the club is the club’s vote count night at the Morwell RSL on the fourth of October. This is a wonderful chance for players, staff, parents and supporters to recognise the contributions of the boys who will move on and those who will form the nucleus of the side next season.