Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

For the first time in almost two months, the Loy Yang B Gippsland Power went into a TAC Cup match with something like their best twenty two players available for selection. Kobe Stevens, Edward Carr and Jack Weston returned after missing games due to state commitments while Michael Ross was back in the team after missing last week due to injury. Key forward John Butcher was still unavailable because of injury from the nationals program while Tim Ryan had played with Casey Scorpions in the VFL the day before.

Given this scenario, and the fact that their opponents the Western Jets were below them on the ladder, it was possible to think that the Power would have a relatively easy day and comfortably get the four premiership points on offer. However, as often happens when players come back from state duties, the side struggled for cohesion and just managed to defeat a determined and hard working Jets team by twelve points.

The pattern of the game was set early in the first term with the Power seemingly in control of much of general play but unable to effectively use it’s many forward fifty entries. It took some vision by Carr and Jed Lamb to set Mitch Dowse up for the opening goal of the match. Instead of getting the hint, the Power went back to their wasteful ways and it took a clever switch of play to allow Dean Woodhead to score a critical goal.

The Jets responded from the resultant centre bounce and suddenly the Power were on the back foot. They continued to give the Jets too little respect and were rightly punished for not manning up in the midfield. Woodhead decided that he needed to set the tone and he scored a long goal to give the side a five point lead at the end of the term.

There was a strong sense of wasted opportunities at the first huddle and it was obvious that the Jets were a serious threat and needed far greater respect than the Power had given them during the first quarter. After a tight opening to the term, the Power scored first after Ross, Woodhead, Tim Northe and Lamb combined. Defender Jordan Dessent then made a rare foray forward to score the Power’s second. The scene was set for the Power to take the game by the throat but once again they began to slaughter scoring opportunities.

Right on cue the Jets hit back and showed how it was done. Turnovers and rebound goals have cost the Power all of their losses in the 2009 season and the Jets were showing just how vulnerable they were once they lost control of the ball. Poor decision making, sloppy skills and a lack of midfield accountability allowed the Jets to score three unanswered goals and go into the long break a point up despite having far fewer scoring opportunities than the wasteful Power.

Once again the Power took the early initiative after Northe and Russell Lehman combined to allow Lamb to weave his magic and then Northe to on of his own after a free kick. Just like the previous two terms the Power were set to break clear of their determined opponents but the Power “disease” struck again and they were punished twice for wasting hard won forward fifty entries. The Jets took advantage of soft turnovers to hit them on the rebound and by the last change they led by four points.

The game was now well and truly in the balance and both sides struggled early to get the momentum going their way. It took the poise and skill of Lamb to give Northe the vital opening goal for the Power. With Nathan Vardy setting the tone in the clearances the Power seemingly took their game to another level as they began to minimise the errors and keep the Jets out of the game. In probably the best piece of individual play ever by a Power player, Jack Weston took on the Jets from halfback and charged up field to score a truly stunning goal. Inspired by this the Power upped their work rates and kept intense pressure on in the contests and forced the ball forward. Dowse put the icing on the cake with a clever goal into a strong wind and the Power had finally sealed the game after looking vulnerable all day.

Final scores Loy Yang B Gippsland Power 10 goals 6 behinds 66 points defeated Western Jets 7 goals 12 behinds 54 points. Goal kickers Tim Northe, Jed Lamb, Dean Woodhead and Mitch Dowse 2, Jordan Dessent and Jack Weston 1. Nick Sing has been a constant for the Power while the “guns” were missing and once again stood tall in defence. He was able to stop his opponents as well as generating drive with dashing runs and purposeful use of the ball.

Nathan Vardy was excellent throughout the match but really rose to another level with the game up for grabs. His deft ruck work gave the midfielders first use of the ball but he also won many important possessions and displayed remarkable agility in the process. Since belatedly earning his chance to impress at TAC Cup level, Tom Corry has quickly shown that he has the skill, courage and poise to be an important contributor for the Power for the rest of the 2009 season.

Ryan Tatterson is another who has stepped it up in the absence of the key players and he too now makes an important contribution to the Power’s best twenty two. He has grown in confidence and provides a potent avenue to attack. Jack Weston was in great form before state duties called and once again showed that he was ready to go with another dashing display off the half back line. His pace and strength make him a critical part of the Power armoury.

Koby Stevens worked hard as usual but seemed to be a little bit out of synch after being out of the team for almost two months. He will be all the better for the re-acclimatisation and obviously will be pivotal to the sides prospects. Tim Northe has also responded to the challenges involved with key players missing. He not only kicked goals but also was involved in setting them up for others with his skill and astute reading of the play in tight situations.

Damian Carroll would be pleased with the four points but was well aware that the boys didn’t play well on the day. Sixty forward entries to thirty four by the Jets tells a sorry story for the Power and it’s been their Achilles heel for the season. The Jets coaches didn’t help the situation by having at least two extra men in defence all day, a tactic that supposedly isn’t allowed in the TAC Cup competition. Other city based sides flaunt the directive and it makes it hard on those doing the right thing by the boys and the competition.

The side will now refocus their attention to this week’s game against the Northern Knights at Northcote on Saturday. Hopefully the state team hangover will be gone and the side will play with more cohesion and purpose against a team that has Denis Pagan at the helm. The Power’s endeavour has never been an issue and their one-percent work is exemplary but their finishing inside fifty is lamentable at times.

When you consider the depth of talented players in this area, it’s a travesty not to use them effectively. If they ever actually deliver the ball with consistent accuracy the result would be awesome but currently they are a long way from this level of expertise. It seemingly appears to be a simple problem to address but the boys struggle to maintain their positive focus for long enough to take the pressure off themselves on the scoreboard.