Gippsland Power Media Release

By Bryan Mitchell

After figuratively “turning the corner” against the Oakleigh Chargers the week before, Loy Yang B Gippsland Power completed the return to the winning list with an impressive and comprehensive victory over the Western Jets in blustery conditions at Williamstown on Sunday. Neither side had recorded a TAC Cup victory before this match, and the pressure was on early in the game. The Power went into the game with a secret weapon as match committee member Max Papley had played and coached at the ground for many seasons in the hey-day of the VFA.

The Jets had the advantage of a strong wind early in the match and the Power struck first when Shaun Marusic goaled after a free kick and fifty metre penalty. The Jets responded quickly and then had a second on the board after catching the Power out on the rebound. Dyson Heppell and Kele Asa Leausa ran and carried the ball to give Aiden Lindsay an important reply and then some long and direct ball use by Blake Carew and Marusic resulted in a goal to Jed Lamb.

The Power had applied excellent pressure on the Jets all over the ground but at the resultant centre bounce they allowed the Jets to take the ball and score their third. More determined play in the packs by the Power created a chance for Carew to kick a clever goal. In a strange set up when kicking with the strong wind, the Jets had players behind the ball and this often resulted in the Power defenders winning the ball without having opponents to worry about. By the first change the Power led by three points but had been in control of much of the play despite kicking into the wind.

The Lucknow connection struck early in the term when Shaun Wyatt and Clay Smith combined almost telepathetically. Some inspired tackling by Aiden Lindsay resulted in the Power’s second of the term and then Dean McDonald snapped a clever goal after a stoppage and it looked like the Power had raised their work rate even further. This was emphasised when Asa Leausa hit the hotspot to see Marusic mark strongly and goal. They hadn’t finished with the Jets and Ryan Pendlebury found McDonald who put on the after burners to score a brilliant major.

By the half time break the Power led by thirty seven points and had played excellent team oriented and disciplined football to achieve it. Their pressure was making the Jets second guess their use of the ball and, once they gained possession of the ball, the Power were following their well considered game plan to the letter. Damian Carroll was delighted with them and urged them to stick to the plan for the second half. He not only praised those who had been heavy possession winners but also singled out players who had specific roles to subdue key Jets players.

It was the Jets who opened the scoring in the third quarter and neither side was willing to concede easy possessions. After a scrambly passage of play Heppell kick the ball long and direct to allow McDonald to apply intense pressure and create another goal. The Power were kicking against the wind and it took some amazing soccer skills by Carew to goal from an impossible angle. As if inspired, Lamb then marked strongly and kicked a long goal into the teeth of the breeze.

In the dying minutes of the term Lamb won a hard ball and found McDonald and then he hit the turbo and created a brilliant goal from nothing. The Power were dominating play and once again more forward pressure resulted in Tim Northe adding another to the Power tally. Late in the term the Jets goaled after a stoppage but they were struggling to get their game going due to the actual and inferred pressure being applied by the Power all over the field. Going into the last term they led by fifty eight points and were playing excellent team football.

The last quarter was somewhat of an anti climax with the Jets scoring from the opening bounce. The wind was becoming less of a factor, but both sides were struggling to get cohesive play going. Pat Jones, Smith and linked up with long direct ball use to allow Hadyn Hector to kick a long bomb and then Marusic hit Lamb on the lead with a perfect pass and he converted. Within the last few minutes of the game the Power were still doing the team things and Damian Hector hit the hot spot with a disciplined kick that Lamb marked and then goaled.

The Jets kicked the last goal of the game but by the siren the deficit was sixty nine points and the Power had finally played four quarters of committed team football. Final scores Loy Yang B Gippsland Power 17 goals 13 behinds 115 points defeated Western Jets 7 goals 4 behinds 46 points. Goal kickers, Dean McDonald and Jed Lamb 4, Shaun Marusic, Aiden Lindsay and Blake Carew 2, Tim Northe, Clay Smith and Hadyn Hector 1.

On a day when the wind was a factor, Shaun Marusic dominated the aerial duels with his ability to mark at full pace. He continually led up to team mates and then worked hard to use his many possessions with precision and purpose. Dyson Heppell was at his busy best winning the ball almost at will and then often putting it quickly into the forward fifty with long and penetrating kicks that gave his forwards many opportunities to be one out with opponents.

Hard running midfielder Aiden Lindsay was one of the Power’s most determined “in and under” players with his strong tackling and second and third efforts. He also won his share of the ball and kicked two important goals. Defender Wayne Morris had a specific role to play and carried out his task to the letter. Not only did he totally nullify the impact of a key Jets player but had the confidence to win the ball and use it effectively. Dean McDonald has steadily been adjusting to the tempo of TAC Cup football with tantalising glimpses of his talents in early games. Against the Jets he took his game to another level and backed himself with often stunning and brilliant effect.

Kele Asa Leausa was miserly in defence but importantly become a play maker with his willingness to run and take the opposition on. His ability to carry the ball across lines helped team mates further up field. Forward Jed Lamb could have kicked many goals as he led strongly but was often illegally pushed under the ball by opponents. He managed four in an important return to form. Tim Northe was subjected to some heavy knocks early but simply worked harder and became a dominant force during an excellent second half. Clay Smith has become an important player for the side with his fine goal sense and, more importantly, the ability to consistently apply excellent pressure in contested ball situations.

Damian was relieved that the boys finally had the confidence to apply themselves consistently to the game plan and had been able to do so for four quarters. It was particularly pleasing to see them learn from Max Papley’s considered advice about how to play the ground and they are now ready to tackle the challenges of the coming weeks in the TAC Cup. They will need to be at their best next Sunday against the highly rated Calder Cannons who will clinically exploit any weaknesses in their resolve or levels of application. It’s the perfect litmus test for Damian and his fellow coaches as they build on the many positives of this game and continue to iron out some of the “kinks” that remain in their play. Importantly the boy’s demonstrated high levels of self belief during the win but even more important was the belief in each other that was so evident throughout the match. This growing confidence can see them make stunning improvement as a team and the Cannons provide them with the perfect test of how well they have learned to back themselves and each other.