

Winning and losing at the same time.

Is there such thing as winning without casualties in 2011?

It's Sunday night and we're watching my sisters team, the Doggies, being pummelled the Hawks. It's awful to watch and I know the feeling of suffering. Her first sms was: Sigh. Her second was: I should write for the Almanac too so that I can vent.

I encouraged her to do so. This week I don't have to vent. I get to write about winning and it feels that my boys are coming home a little. The game against Melbourne was the turn around, yesterday felt like a confirmation. Who knows what the next games bring but the Saints answered some questions: like, where the hell have you been, and who are you blokes, are you the same team as last year?

The worst though, was watching Goddard go down with a sickening hip from Dawson. Why do they call it friendly fire? It didn't look very friendly. And then once the game was in the bag, Dempster and Blake fly into and over each other and Dempster is out and requiring oxygen. Then Lynch breaks a finger. Cripps, we found out at the beginning of the game, is out for the rest of the season. Kosi is still having trouble with his ankle. (Sorry Kosi, I wrote mean things about you last week). It was and remains awful. Ross Lyon covered his face after Goddard and Dempster were out. What an injury nightmare all teams are having. By the end of the game, we won but at what cost to young bodies? It felt sickening, and I wasn't relieved until later that night I caught on the later football panel that both Goddard and Dempster, Perth hospital buddies, both flew out with the team at 1.30am, both all clear.

This mornings The Game Day had a curb side interview at Melbourne Airport with Goddard and although he was upright, he looked mighty stiff and sore. At least he had his humour, even on the stretcher, putting a thumbs up for family and friends and fans? On the curb side, he says he'll be playing next week. We wish. We'll see.

The game being in W.A., we got the luxury of watching from our very comfy chairs at home. It is 24 degrees in Perth, over 38,000 are expected and both Saints and Freo need to win. McEvoy is back which is good and St.Kilda look fit and healthy. The commentary team show a clip from the St.Kilda rooms showing the medical staff practicing the use of the stretcher and how to carry a player safely on it. Who knew it would be needed twice in this game.

St.Kilda are on fire. A quick goal from Peake, followed by some back and forward, and then a neat pass from Ray to Jones and a goal. St.Kilda have become accurate, there is good forward pressure, good defensive pressure, they are kicking man to man instead of to packs where we then lose possession in the scramble. Hello men, love to see you again.

All my footy buddies are accounted for, all watching in their individual homes. Sms's and phone calls to all of them, over the afternoon.

Jones goals again. Fife for Fremantle is injured but they re-strap his shoulder and he rests on the bench. They are sorely missing their injured big man, Sandilands. A lot of passing it back team to

team, getting it forward and having it taken back. But all the pressure is in the Saints forward line, we are just pushing and fighting every pack, every tackle.

Dockers get their first score, a point. Freo beginning to improve, but only another point.

I love Siposs and his determination. We've started to kick to packs again, and the outcome is predictable, we lose control of the contest and ball. Another point to Ray. Then Montagna kicks truly after we steal the ball back and Freo can only answer with a behind.

Then Goddard goes down and the horror unfolds. Is he convulsing (later it is explained as his reaction to the acute pain in his neck.)

All Sainters feel Goddards pain. Not another hero down. The quarter ends with Freo 3 points and Saints 4. 4. 28.

In the break, there are frantic phone calls and sms's between my football family and friends. Uncle Bob, who's been doing this for 50 plus years, is holding his breath and hoping. Goddard is off to hospital. Nick Winmar is in.

Fremantle start the second quarter fired up. Armitage gets a point. St.Kilda are starting to make mistakes. Stevens misses an easy goal. Then Armitage steps up again and goals. We are 5 goals ahead and Freo hasn't scored a major yet. Siposs is in the hands of the trainers. Ballentine is hurt. Hills has a good run at goal and gets a minor score.

Then Peake shows his ex-team how it is done and goals on the run from the middle of the ground. This is what is different for the Saints. Our centre line is firing, we are not just bombing it to Reiwoldt and it's working. This is followed by a point to Milne but he is playing a lot in a defensive role as well. Then Freo have a good run from Morton to Crowley to Duffield and goal, 15 minutes into the second quarter. This is followed by some terrible play and Reiwoldt seems to hurt his hand.

We are relieved that he is OK and Montagna goals another. Then Reiwoldt does a beautiful action and gets the ball off the ground and handballs it. He does this twice in this game, good team work. Armitage runs with it but it's a behind. The match ups are interesting: Dempster/Ballentine, Hill/Jones.

St.Kilda get a free kick and Siposs, Siposs you beauty, goals. From the commentators: "Saints Footy Mark II". Then Ballentine has a go at Shneider and a free for Schneider which is instantly taken and given to Ballentine when Schneider continues the fight. Thankfully, they are not accurate and our defence holds up. Back to St.Kildas' end but their captain Pavlich does well in defence. There is a fight off the ball.

Dawson seems to be improving but still makes enough errors to give many free kicks away over the game. There is more fighting and Montagna's jumper is ripped. Fife kicks at goals for Freo but the quarter ends with Freo 1 . 5 . 11 and St.Kilda 8 . 8 . 56. I like that scoreboard and we have our half time toilet breaks, tea making and food collection. Phones are busy again.

Third quarter starts messy, messy Freo, messy Saints. A point to each. More mistakes for Gilbert but he rights' the wrong two seconds later and accurately kicks to Peake who lines up for his third goal.

More please, we're 51 points ahead. Hill marks for a good set up and goals. Siposs hit in the head. Schneider goals. More pressure up the other end, but we steal the ball back and Shneider kicks another along the ground. Ballentine misses a sitter and Schneider gets another goal. Bradley, free and goal, and then Morton kicks truly. Freo are starting to play better and get more possession, and then Bradley goes for goal but hits the post. We breathe again, we don't want Freo come-backs. Has Armitage hurt his knee? We've got no extra legs. They are getting tired. It is hot. Every Saint is inside Freo's 50. At the end of this quarter, Freo 4.10.34, Saints 12.10.82.

So it's final quarter, and it begins beautifully with Schneider and Peake combining to help Schneider get his fourth. Dempster snaps a point. We are leading by 9 goals. Can we relax yet?

Fifteen minutes in, Palmer gets his chance to goal, and Freo get their 5th. Armitage, another point to us, we'll take anything. Winmar defends nicely and in the end, Milne gets the ball and goals his first. More back and forth and Stevens finally manages to get his first goal of the game.

Then minutes to go. We can relax now, I think to myself. We are 55 points ahead. Please, no more injuries, then Lynch hurts his finger. Pavlich gets his first goals. Only 7 minutes to go. 47 points the difference. Somewhere there is another Freo goal.

And at this 7 minutes to go point, Dempster and Blake have their crash and everything is stopped as we mop up the bodies. Oxygen tanks. He's going to keep Goddard company.

All I can think of is the bloody siren, stop the carnage, no one else needs to die, the war is over. Where's the white flag? If one team is so ahead, can we call it quits for the night? Finally, the siren goes, the song is sung and the channel quickly hits the news.

Fremantle: 7.14 56

St.Kilda 15.12.102

Yvette Wroby

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