

No expectations....no worries (or from the toilet to the sky –a super performance)

With the press in full flight this week of doom and gloom for St.Kilda, and North Melbourne's good performances, Saints fans like me were quite reluctant to feel any confidence. A good six weeks after a nightmare year, a run in better than expected with the Pies, and then a come down last week, well, "no expectations" it is for this game. So I gave in to my familiar lack of confidence and settled back not really worrying. I might take that stand more often. I left the worrying to the Saints and their "Bubble" as I have been reading hungrily all week.

David Misson, the Conditioning Coach for the Saints, 2010 book, "The Bubble", is a revelation. For a non-sportsperson like myself, the life of a professional athlete, especially one wearing my favourite colours, is a place of mystery and ignorance for me. David's personal and professional tale of the Saints from the 2009 Grand Final Loss to the 2010 Grand Final loss fills in all the gaps. It tells of the physical batterings the players take even when not actually playing, the hazards of their everyday practicing, training, living. It's a psychological thriller, a tale of personalities like Ross Lyons, like Nick Riewoldt, like Lenny Hayes, so far quiet on Brendon Goddard. It paints a picture of the good days and bad, the week in and out worries and work of a team. It talks in details about Riewoldt's hamstring injury in Round 3, but really all the injuries. It talks of Joey Montagnas' courtroom where issues get sorted out with some humour and a lot of imagination. It's a wonder a team gets fielded at all. And the ups and downs of trying to keep a team thinking and motivated and hungry and challenging, how do they do it. There should be medals for the background men (and women like dieticians) who spend so much time keeping this group of men up and running and playing.

So a game like last night makes more sense to me now. What these players have to do week in and out, to get out there and have a go, let alone keep winning, is a wonder to behold. Thus prepared, with less numbers in our regular group with one overseas and one working, we sat and waited to see what the night produced. If the flu or gastro going through St.Kilda last week had any of the effect that mine had on me at the same time, it explains the loss to a hungry Sydney.

The game started with a beauty from Milne, a second from North's star Petrie and then a third and fourth to a fitter, more hungry Schneider. Adams for North hit back but Kosi finished the first term with a truly lovely goal. We were in there, but so were North. They were fast and hungry for Finals as well.

Saints: 4.4.28

Kanga's 2.5.17

Second quarter began with that old sinking feeling as North stepped up and kicked 5 for the quarter, the first to Adams, second to Harper, third to Petrie, another to Harper and one to Pedersen. We looked cooked and tired and then a miracle happened. We stepped it up and stopped them, as well as started scoring of our own. Riewoldt got his first after shanking the first attempt earlier, regaining his missing confidence, Armitage pushed through a good one, followed by another from Riewoldt and he's back to his TRUE form, another from Nick Dal Santo, and the last from the quarter to Nick Riewoldt. We couldn't believe it. Twenty points down in the first 15 minutes, then 2 goals ahead at half time. Very relieved. Very noisy. Very happy.

Saints 9.9.63

Kanga's 7.7.49

Time went quickly and the next quarter started. There were 35,848 who watched what unfolded next. Milne did what Milne does as started the quarter with a goal, and then another. He was happy. So were we. Big Kosi who is now a formidable force as he marks, sends players flying as he moves through packs and uses his big body to our advantage, goals the next, followed by Blake coming up to the other end and goaling. Wells reminded us all that the Kanga's were still about, followed by a good one from Edwards. We answered with one from Schneider and another from Milne. Hello, who knew we were at a high scoring game. Twenty-four goals so far (and 23 misses).

Saints 15.16.106

Kanga's 9.7.61

What I've noticed is we don't play such polite football anymore. After Riewoldt was flattened, he didn't take the proffered hand of apology, he groused through. Saints are playing tougher, more unforgiving football, which is what is needed against the top sides. Take no-prisoner football. No more Mr. Nice-guys, it's our turn to flatten and thump.

So the Saints crowd and the team are braying for blood by the final term. And we got it by the bucket-load. Riewoldt gets our first, followed by Kosi in great form, followed by another from the other twin tower forward Riewoldt. HE'S BACK.....

It's OK guys, just keep it up. What you don't get the little forwards of Schneider and Milne are getting, not for forget that any of the others are charging through and attempting goals. Hence the high percentage of behinds being cooked. The boys were attacking and attacking. Montagna steals one on the run before North pipes up through Edwards and goals another. They only manage the one in the quarter.

The fans are disappointed that the siren goes and the game is over and we don't get more goals but we are not disappointed in the effort, the accuracy and the form of the Saints as we get ready to confront a very different side next week in Carlton. Rina has organised with a friend and we will be sitting in third tier Members at the MCG. Bring it on.

Yvette Wroby

Sunday August 28th 2011