

Dare to Dream....again

Prelude:

This mad Monday for night footy saw Rina and I picking up Amanda from her place. Someone had run into her car a while ago, and by next week she will have a new set of wheels. At Amandas front door, we met a "fairy" in the form of her very little sister. Once inside, I asked the fairy if she could make a wish and make St.Kilda win. She said she can't. She had (her mother and I thought) been influenced by some Carlton nuts around the immediate family (who are St.Kilda nuts). But she turned around and said something about making "Carlton disappear". Blessed is this 4 year old. She's my fairy of choice from here on in.

More Prelude:

At the Docklands, we were all ready for a good night. I'd tipped the Blues on their recent form, even though I thought St.Kilda showed good effort against the Hawks last week. The Carlton cheer squad though, got my competitive juices going, with the banner which read:

"Monday night footy

The Blues are Back

To Give these Saints

A good old whack".

I have always hated banners that "go" at the other teams rather than support their own. I leaned over to my uncle Bob and said, "NOW I really want to beat the bastards". I wonder if the Saints boys read that banner too?

The Saints banner read:

"It's Monday night footy

The Saints under lights

Let's play together

And make our night bright."

The game itself:

The Sainters did make our night bright and instead of getting whacked, did the whacking. You wouldn't think so from the first 15 minutes of errors and muck-ups that had us thinking it would be a long Monday night of football indeed.

Waite put the Blues on the board very quickly after turnover errors from us, but after a miss Riewoldt answered and Milera made a statement with a second Saints goal. It was on. We were there to play. Betts answered with another. Saints were using their bodies, there was argy-bargy, pushing and shoving, shows of toughness and strength. There was great forward pressure from the Saints, great pressure all around. The Blues were speedy if they got possession, but in a surprise for the SainTERS fans watching in disbelief, so were we. Welcome back Farren Ray, inspired effort. There is good shepherding, more accurate kicking man to man, and now, if it was bombed, we had good big men to take the mark and even better little crumbers in Milera, Saad and Milne, to pick up the left overs.

Some great Carlton play saw Simpson get it to Betts who passed it back to Simpson and he goals. The Blues fans lift the Docklands lid with the roar. The Blues play as expected. Saints are putting on a good show. Walker goals and Saints supporters ponder.

Even though the Blues keep getting it out of the centre and mostly winning the ruck competition, we defend well. Kosi to Montagna, back to Duigan back to us, back to them. Turnover upon turnover, Ray to Garlett to Blake but back to them.

The Saints are backing each other up in roving packs, as are the Baby Blues (colour not age) instead of Navy, Blues. More missed goals for the Saints, Carlton ahead by 10 points.

Then from the dropped mark of Joseph, Milne steals the ball and goals, and being the man he is, goes back to rub it in, and suddenly there's a fracas, lots of pushing and shoving and a ripped jumper for Milne and the umpire telling him to go change. (When watching the replay, the commentators can't remember an umpire ever ordering someone to go off to change jumpers!). We, the audience, didn't mind a half-naked Milne running about. Or should I just speak for myself?

We are remembering the last few years and the scant low scoring games. This is Scotty Watters team now. Defend, defend, defend and attack, attack and attack. Loving the change. Loving the scoring. Saints get it to their forward moments before the siren, Ray gets held and earns a free and goals. We are two points ahead. A ten goal quarter. Lots of happiness from both camps. This has been a good quarter of ripping footy, literally and figuratively.

Saints: 5.3.33 Blues 5.1.31

Simpson is good for the Blues, as is Judd who is everywhere, shadowed by Jones. Kreuzer kicks the next goal. It goes back to Carlton's end but Blake defends well, and eventually it ends in a missed mark from Kosi but he gives a great second effort that allows Saad to gather the ball, to step aside, kick around his body and goals.

Judd pushes the ball forward for the Blues, Dempster, playing really well, defends. Montagna has lifted up another notch. Milera misses, scores a behind. Both teams are going through the centre of the ground for quick ball movement. The Blues get it back to Walker but he misses too. I say a little thankyou prayer. Then back, a sprint by Stanley sees him get the ball to Kosi, who takes a mark and goals.

There is tough tackling by Del Santo. The ball is punched forward, Del Santo, Saad, Milera but again scores a minor. Several end changes. Simpkin is brave in defence. Garlett pulls Geary away from

the ball not in his possession, and Geary gets a free to Montagna who loses it but Lenny Hayes steals it back to gets a wonderful goal. Suddenly, the Saints are 13 points ahead.

There is intent in the Saints game. Accurate passing. Good pressure. Plenty of pressure. Bucket loads of pressure. Armitage is sent off with the blood rule, comes back looking like he's just had old fashioned dental surgery. Perhaps Carlton players wished that Milnes chin was bandaged up to stop his verbal gamesmanship. In Armitages' absence, there is fast forward movement, Jones, Del Santo to Milera who goals. A video review. It's confirmed as a goal. Saints roar.

Such contests. Unbelievable. Gibbs responds for the Blues with a goal, much needed for his team. Murphy gets the ball to Simpson but he misses. Are the Blues shocked at the Saints persistence? Have they come tonight thinking, like everyone else, that the Saints were slower than this? Betts steps up for the Blues with another goal, and gives a statement of intent. But the Blues follow up with several more missed opportunities, and Riewoldt also misses one.

Again, with seconds to go in this quarter, Montagna directs a kick to Kosi who marks and kicks to Gram who gets a contest, but Lenny tackles allowing Milne to pass to Saad and he goals. The siren rings out with the Saints now 17 points ahead. We are all in shock, happy shock. Can that be right? Did the Saints just kick 6 goals in the quarter and keep the Blues to 3?

Saints: 11.5.71 Blues 8.6.54

It is half time. There are jobs to be done, toilet stops to be made, phone calls to my mum and answering texts. Sustenance to be had. We are in dream land. Is this really happening? We haven't played like this since 2009-2010.

The game starts again. More ping-pong footy possession. Judd always threatening, but is matched by Jones all night and by Simpkin defending now, then to Dempster, Ray, Gilbert, Riewoldt, Steven and goal. Blues do similar work and it ends with a Scotland goal. 18 points the difference. Hampson to Walker, goal. 12 points. There is no relaxing, for us or the Saints. Milne gets held in our forward line and gets free. Goals. 18 points.

More intense play, Saad trips but manages a very cool headed pass to Goddard who goals. 24 points. When it goes up the other end, Gibbs scores a point. Again, the Saints kick to kick, Hayes, Dempster, Montagna, Kosi. Ellard is on, Joseph subbed off. It is up Saints forward line, Stanley to Milne who does his magic around the corner of body and goals. 29 ahead.

A chant starts above us: MIL-NEY, MIL-NEY, MIL-NEY. A soccer chant, like the one the Pies get going when they are happy. I have not heard this before from Sainters, but we like it. Betts soccers a behind. Lenny Hayes involved yet again in scoring when he gets it to Del Santo to Armitage who goals.

Another behind to Betts, before Ellard earns his spot with a goal. It's been awhile. Another point to the Blues before Robertson gets a goal. Margin back to 20 points.

Out of the centre. The intensity rises yet again. Back and forward it goes at lightning speed. We are relieved when the siren goes. A nine goal quarter. Are the Blues coming back?

Saints 16.6.102 Blues 12.10.82

The last quarter starts with no goals, plenty of misses, a substitute with Wilkes off and Siposs on. Young legs. Good legs when he played last year. Everyone is in the Blues forward 50. Gilbert finally kicks it long and the players all have to run back. Saad kicks it in front of himself, inspired, then passes to Stanley who is running equally fast beside him and he goals. PACE. IN ST.KILDA!!

Half way through the quarter I get my first congratulatory text. Not ready for that yet. This is Carlton. They can come back. It's only 25 points and I'm a Sainter. We are used to having silver shiny objects wrenched from our grasp, as well as games we should be winning (see Port Melbourne and Fremantle this year).

I worry, we all worry, as the Blues seem to fire up again. They press forward, we defend back. Gram kicks to Armitage who goals. 34 points ahead. NOW I start to relax.

Judd has so much to do with any positive moves for the Blues. Ellard gets a goal. 28 points, 9 ½ minutes to go. Blues push forward, but hurt by their own inaccuracy, it's another poster. From a mistake by Siposs, Ellard goals again. We can't lose it, surely....

Blues forceful but we are still tackling like the possessed, like demons, (not the Melbourne kind). It goes forward for the Saints, Stanley goals again and seals the match. Suddenly, West Coast and the Swans don't look as worrying as they did before tonight, but it's a short week of preparation so who knows.

Hampson posts another try, with two minutes to go, I have taken the ear plugs out, the radio is off and we are ready to roar. Ellard and Gibbs miss two opportunities. There have been 33 goals tonight. Last week I wrote we needed another Kosi, he had 5 against the Hawks. Tonight, we had Armitage, Saad, Stanley, Milera, Milne with four, Steven, Hayes, Riewoldt, Goddard, Ray and Kosi. We had a team of goal kickers. We had a team full stop.

The Sinters in the stand began to sing the song in the last few minutes. When the siren goes, we sing it three times. We waited as those around us went home, I wanted to see the happy boys sing together in the rooms. Milne led as usual. DD from the Almanac saw us and we all hugged and celebrated together. He was off for a drink at the Social Club. We struggled home, tired but very very happy.

Epilogue:

I have one Saints eldest daughter, and two Blue adult-ish children. Last year when the Blues beat the Saints, I had come home disheartened and found my sons Blues scarf draped on my bedroom door. After this game, he woke up the next morning to two St.Kilda scarfs and three St.Kilda flags all around him as he stepped out of his room. Mothers and Saints supporters, and tragic combinations of both, have long memories about football, if nothing else. The ante had to be upped.

Go Saints.

Yvette Wroby

16th May 2012