

A Heart Full of Lenny and Heart Beats for Farren

1. A week is a long time in footy

What a weird few weeks of football we've had. The favourites haven't been winning. Teams like Richmond upset Premiership hopefuls Hawthorn, Collingwood find some form against an unbelievably improved Adelaide, who were kept scoreless in the final quarter in a tight game. Bulldogs took it right up to the less confident Cats, and could almost have stolen it but for inaccuracy and that Cats' buoyancy that Saints fans know TOO well.

I went to the Dream Time game last weekend with another Knacker Bob and it was a strange experience for us both watching teams we had no particular attachment too. I was willing the Tigers to win but Essendon, now on the top of ladder until West Coast reclaimed the position at the end of the footy week. Next Friday night, I will be willing the Tigers to lose.

Going to the Dreamtime game confirmed what we all know, how different is a game of footy, even a very meaningful and strong game, if your team isn't playing? You watch with interest, but not with passion. You watch with the eyes, not the heart and whole body straining, hoping, praying, pushing and willing on. When it's not your team, it matters little. When it's your team, your home ground, your legend playing, well, it's all in the recipe. It's ours. It's mine. It has meaning and heat. The winning feels so like a little slice of heaven. We spend a week happy. The day looks brighter. There's a spring in the step and a wish to watch replays and footy programs on TV, to buy the papers, to extend the joy and elation.

2. The Art of Lenny

What is also special about this week has been the reaction on the Almanac site to my St.Kilda artwork, especially having Lenny up last week before Brendon Goddard and a re-publishing of the Lenny Hayes in line with the celebration and conversations about him all week, the footballer loved by all teams and supporters because of his bravery and his determination. I even got feedback from a member of his family, who reckoned I captured the Hayes smile, slightly crooked but full of love and meaning. I was asked by JTH if I could make prints, and talked to another artist, Jim Pavlidis whose work is on the front of 2011 Almanac, who has generously offered to help me learn how to do this. This site is unbelievable, as other writers can attest, to the support, friendship, warmth, encouragement and utter pleasure to be had in this most unique community of creative and mad souls. And next weekend, I go to Burnie in Tasmania with a bunch of Knackers for the launch of 2011 Footy Almanac. I will miss an unbelievable game now between St.Kilda and Richmond, who knew this would end up being the contest we are now expecting.

3. The Game was on.

I loved the roof of the Dome last night. While Melbourne has been receiving a belting from the rain in the in the last few days, we were snug and cosy inside this miracle of a footy ground with a closing roof. A very big, mechanically sound, closing roof, which enabled us to enjoy a game without the weather. Thank you, engineers of all kinds. I often wonder at your abilities to make the world what it is. It was cold, but who cares. It was home, and it was Lenny's 250th game.

The Saints came out firing the first shots, but Swans looked on and ready, leading us 3-1 goals before we could blink. So we sat all together, me and my mob, and watched with awe, admiration and pleasure as St.Kilda took it up to the Swans and then rolled them in such a thorough and convincing

way. I'm not going to hark on the missed goals and the poor turnovers because Sydney suffered the same, we just did more good stuff in between. Really good stuff.

Every time Lenny went near the ball, we cheered. The love was flowing, it was Lenny's night, and he played like he usually does, there is nothing but the ball and the team. He is under packs, zipping in and out, always present. He attacked and defended. The only thing he didn't do tonight was kick a goal, but we had 10 goal kickers and only one Lenny in the centre. He leads the new centre-men by example and his body. He is, according to the players interviewed before the game, the coach's pet. Bloody oath, he's everyone's pet.

After a close first quarter where the Swans led by 9 points, the Saints dominated the second and third quarters in a display that warmed our hearts to the core. Attacking, defending, attacking, defending. Every time a Swan got the ball, two of our warriors wrapped their loving arms around them. I got to think of all those players in the league that have been wrapped up in Lenny's arms all these years. I would take it any day, but the players, oh oh, bloody Hayes and there goes possession.

Farren Ray played his 150th game, and he performed so well, never stealing Lenny's thunder but being incredible in defence and attack. He has grown in confidence and has been better since his return to the team. He seems fitter and faster and tougher.

Brendon Goddard is so funny to watch close up. An incident happened to the right of us where some of the younger players were being roughed up and you could see his intent to protect and bully back as he did some shoving to get them out of the way. A bit like a mother, toughly protective of her young. And he looks like he'd eat THEIR young... In battle, he looks mean, and grumpy. Don't get in my way kind of attitude. He's is constantly there both in defence and through the centre, popping up when needed. Make a mistake under pressure and he gets even grumpier, especially at his own mistakes.

And Jason Blake deserves a nod. Everyone talks about the fact that in all his years in the club, he's never scored a Brownlow point. Not a one. For someone now slotted into being our ruckman most of the game, and also so good in the wings, and even kicking a goal just to join the party, his presence and effort and skill were really appreciated by the Sainters in the stands and on the ground.

To me, other stand outs were Cripps, Steven, Jones, Geary before injury, Saad, Dempster, Dal Santo, Simpkin, Milera, Siposs and Gwilt when he settled in. Gilbert and Gram worked well in defence. Actually, the whole bloody team were a stand out, because Kosi played his role in defending Nick Riewoldt and creating a contest, Nick kicked two straight, Leigh Montagna was mighty in his effort, and Milne was our highest scorer with 3. Ticks all round boys. You did good.

So in the era of Scotty Watters, Saints booted 16.15.111 to Swans 12.11.83. Bring it on Scotty Watters. There wouldn't be a Saints supporter looking back for quids. Onwards and upwards in the ladder we go.

Yvette Wroby

Forever one-eyed

27th May 2012