

Loose Men Everywhere.

My uncle Bob uttered these words after North Melbourne kicked two quick goals at the Docklands last night and declared their intent; they were there to win. That's what it felt like, that in a moment, North possessed the ball, the ground, the universe and the Saints boys were left chasing. Fatigued and aging and looking worse for wear and not at all refreshed after the BYE. Montagna, our multicultural ambassador and Riewoldt, our captain, steadied the ship with goals, and we gained some momentum, but it wasn't sustained.

My worry started on Thursday night at selection. I thought Scotty Watters had fallen into the trap of choosing mostly the 2009 team. They were back, and in their heyday, these guys were an unbelievable team. But that was three years ago. Most have sustained a major injury and recovered, most haven't been performing at their best consistently, most have looked better because the younger, faster men have re-energised them and have shaken things up a little. All except Lenny seemed to be somewhere else. There was no Simpkin or Cripps, Ledger, Newnes, no Winmar or Siposs. Where were Ray, Polo, Wilkes and Peake? Ray and Peake are a little old guard but good on their day.

OK, even if we just look at the boys we did have, and how brilliant Lenny Hayes continues to be, and that it was two goals from him, Gram, Montagna, Milne, Armitage that showed some class from the older boys, (with Steven, McEvoy and Milera shining for the newer ones), our game seemed slower, less defensive and certainly less flair that it has been of late.

The Kangaroos kicked us to the curb with their speed, accuracy, energy. Hansen kicked three, Petrie so strong adding 4, Thomas with three, Adams, Wells with two, and a spread of goal kickers with Bastinac, Swallow, Thomson, Harper, Tarrant, Harvey and one other that I missed charting.

Our back line changes every week with the usual suspects returning from injury, but there's been so many changes they are not playing like the unit of old. Scotty Watters says we lost in the midfield, but it was Montagna, Hayes, Steven and Schneider and Armitage that even kept us in the game, with Milne playing closer to the centre and kicking it forward as well. Stanley showed pace but has done another hamstring injury. McEvoy is still finding fitness after his. Jones was out and we don't know why, but we missed his speed, tagging and determination in the middle.

Kosi vomited throughout the game, Riewoldt is carrying an injury or being well held, poor Blakey has done his ankle and looked in so much pain. New boys Saad and Milera, as well as so many old boys, just handed it over to the opposition. There were moments of brightness, but like the rain, the cloud over St.Kilda has set in again. Flatness pervaded the Saints, supporters and players alike.

I want to know, how do we sustain positivity? In the players, how do they get their tired, sore bodies up and ready again for a potential smashing against the Bombers, who are always faster than us even on a good Saints day.

And I miss Gwilts hair.

When the Gold Coast Suns flew West to play the Eagles this weekend, I imagined the dread in their minds. What does their coach say to motivate them, to give them something to fly all that way and play for?

What sustains me? Hanging with my uncle Bob, Garry, Rina and Amanda. Occassionally meeting players like Brendon Goddard at Tesltra Elsternwick on Saturday, and handing him an Almanac 2011. Drawing cartoons as expressions of what caught my eye lately. And of course, my weekly therapy of writing.

Thus sustained, I get back to my everyday life and thank goodness I don't have to have cold sea baths this morning like our boys are likely to be having. Now we're going towards the back end of the season, and the ladder, it's now time to wonder about the next games....

Yvette Wroby

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