

To Be or Not to Be...(in the finals)

It's all about probabilities and who else wins and continuing to win and it's all too complex for this footy brain. When your CEO tells Saints fans in Adelaide after a 4 point loss in Round 12 that we're looking forward to NEXT year, well, your expectations are somewhat diminished. Perhaps the players and the coach weren't aware that this was the party line. You'd think he'd be on the same page or at least keep falsely positive until the end is nigh.

So we are just finishing Round 20 and beat Melbourne by 25 points and lose our superstar captain Nick Riewoldt to top off the evening. We play a great first 10 minutes and then suck collectively for the next 40. We improve for the second half, in what turns out to be quite a high scoring game for both teams. One of the whipping boys of the competition, Melbourne, at least looked in the game, and showed some spirit and interest in stealing the game away. They got within four points at one stage, but the Saints stepped on the petrol and drove away, only to have the scores clawed back a little in the last 10 minutes of the game when the Saints stopped running.

So now, Saints supporters seem to be watching the clock and who wins in other games to tell us where and when our season will be over. Can we beat the Cats next week. Poor Hawkins, like Riewoldt, having a much better year, got concussed. But the Cats are full of others with experience and strength and the wish to beat us, so it will be quite a fresh challenge. Carlton showed some form last night as well against Brisbane. We need Fremantle and North Melbourne to begin to lose (North won....),and Saints to win every game, to be....

So all this got me thinking of what would actually happen if we did get into the eight, what might happen then. And it's hard to predict, I have got 5 tips right this weekend, each game is becoming impossible to judge. Late omissions or inclusions affect strengths and abilities of teams. It's been a season of mixed expectations and successes and failures.

I heard one commentator says that the Saints have actually played very well this year and their position on the ladder doesn't reflect how well they've played. I disagree. We are exactly where we have played. So if by some miracle or circumstance or good play Saints actually get into the finals, they would need to win every game from here until the Grand Final. Every game. We'd have to go back to 2009 form and confidence. In our dreams. Our run so far this year: LWLWLWLWLWL-LWVWLWLW. We have only strung two winning games twice this season, against poorer teams (GCS and Western Bulldogs, Essendon, Brisbane Lions). On the above Win/Loss ratio and form, we due for a L next week. But in this season, who knows.

For it to be....

Sydney: top of the ladder, only beaten by Collingwood on Saturday night by 1 goal, they play the Dogs, Hawthorn and Geelong before the year is out. They are very strong, fast, hard and determined. We beat them once this year, and almost did it again but were flogged for the effort in the end. Saints could....

Adelaide: playing very strong and good footy and the Saints got within 4 points in our last encounter. They play Brisbane Lions, Melbourne, and Gold Coast Suns before the end of the year. They must be laughing. They have played some incredible games and will only increase in confidence over the next few weeks. Saints could....

Collingwood: can play brilliant football and continue to have a steady flow of tough footballers ready to step up when stars like Dane Swan err in judgement. They stole it from Sydney on Saturday night and look fully confident and able to keep going. They play North Melbourne, West

Coast Eagles and Essendon on the run home. A tough ask but they are up and about and show no signs of slowing. Collingwood only beat us by 1 goal but know how to beat the Saints on any day. Saints could...

Hawthorn: continue to be steady without their star Buddy Franklin, actually look better when they find other options and are crushing most of the teams they play. They have Gold Coast Suns, a tough one against Sydney and West Coast to finish the season. They are playing well and should get their own good rating in the lead up to the finals. Hawks beat the Saints by 35 points. A thumping. Saints could...

West Coast Eagles: would feel confident after beating a tough Geelong outfit this week, and now face Port Adelaide, Collingwood and Hawthorn before the finals. They are beginning to get back their stars into their team. They beat the Saints by 20 points much earlier in the year. They have had a few bad weeks but seem to be up and about. Saints could....

Geelong: Geelong seem to have the wood over the Saints and continue to beat us. This year, we haven't played. Next week will tell us how they are travelling. But they are determined bastards. So good at keeping on no matter what. They know how to win. They like winning. They play us next week, then Western Bulldogs then Sydney. I expect them to win next week though hope for miracles. Saints though, could....

North Melbourne: North beat the Saints in Round 14 by 33 points. They seem to beat us easily. Sitting now 6th on the ladder, with 12 wins, with 11 to Essendon and Fremantle and two above St.Kilda. Saints need them to lose a lot going into the last few games for us to have a chance. They play Collingwood next week (we have a chance there if the Pies show form and beat them), Fremantle the week after (it may not matter who smashes who as we need them both to lose lots of games) and finish up the season playing GWS. It's weird needing other teams to lose to give you a chance. It doesn't feel right, though we'll take it. Saints could beat them.....(But Essendon didn't tonight).

Essendon: well, we'd like Essendon to lose after they broke our 19 game winning run in 2009. And we need them to lose to make room for us. Essendon played North today, and lost, they play an improving Carlton next week, Richmond the week after and finish off with Collingwood. A very tough run home, and they give us Saints some hope. And Saints could...maybe...

Fremantle: are one game ahead of the Saints and sitting 9th on the ladder. They were beaten by Adelaide yesterday (that was good for us apparently), play Richmond and then North then an improving Melbourne at home. Can we hope for some wobbles by Fremantle and for them to step aside? Fremantle beat the Saints by 13 points in Round 4, breaking their voodoo against the Saints at the Docklands, giving Ross Lyon some triumph and bragging rights. Can we beat them if we have to. Saints could?

Each one of these teams can beat the Saints and some beat us easily. It's hard to see that with our inconsistent form and play, we could keep winning. If we make the finals, we have to beat each of these teams we may face. No blinking. No missing. No messing about. No second chances. No excuses. No chance...(or is there....)

One week at a time, as they all say down at Seaford. One week. Watch this space.

Yvette Wroby
Sunday 12th August 2012