

There's a party happening and we're not invited.

1. The leaders:

I just heard Nick Riewoldt on SEN on Saturday morning. He was up in the coaching box last night at the game, sitting alongside the HULK Eric Bana who was their guest. Nick said there were a few air punches in the third quarter and the beginning of the last (matching those from the Saints faithful all around the ground, at home or overseas) but he, Eric, was pretty quiet and I imagine he'd be in FAN heaven. His claim to Saints tragicocity peaked when he had a "footy room" in his house in an American movie "Funny People" and he used his own memorabilia and his own mania for the Saints as part of this story.

Anyway, back to Nick. Quite a telling interview this morning. The Saints are waiting for the end of this round to see if there is any skerrick of hope, a glimmer of possibility, that the Saints play on after the next two weeks. If we play in the finals, he'll try and come back, and leave treatment to after the finals. If not, he'll fix his other "good" knee right away. He said he thought he'd have another 2-3 years, if his body held up. Nick says it's unlikely he'll be captain next year, and after being asked, thought that the most obvious choice would be Brendon Goddard. My old grumpy bum. The anointed one. The perhaps, soon to be, holder of the chalice, poisoned or not. Boy, that sure puts it onto Brendon to sign on the dotted line down at Linen House.

I felt quite comforted listening to him talk about the team, the game, his future wedding to Catherine in the States, his wish to stay involved with football and Melbourne town into the future, his wish to spend time completely away with his new family. They talked about perhaps a role for him in the States looking at talent to recruit for the AFL. Looks like recruiting may go offshore along with our manufacturing and food production....

Then SEN went on to talk about the Saints list, and how we have the old boys, Riewoldt, Kosi, Milne, Montagna, Blake, Hayes, a few younger/older ones like Goddard, Schneider, Gram, Gilbert, Fisher, Dal Santo, Gwilt and now Wilkes, and then a shortage of that 21-25 year old group of developing future players. Then there's the baby Saints. The boys on SEN felt that the only trade option would be Del Santo who could buy us some big guys. The trade off? He might to get to play in a Premiership team, we might be able to get something that will help us in 3-5 years. Everyone knows the Saints are gone til then.

When finals hopes look GONE, we start getting practical about the future to keep our minds busy.

2. The Stockholm Syndrome

I love how my Almanac Cats friends all feigned uncertainty about Cats victory before playing the Saints, when in reality, the Cats have had the wood over the Saints in all but one game in 2009. They are harder, faster, more confident and just know how to take a game or retake a game if we get within a sniff. And what about their superstar Hawkins... I'd even tipped the Cats, with my old rationale that I'd win either way. We had only one quarter where we looked like a chance last night, but inaccuracy killed our chances and we just plain ran out of steam. We were one man down on the bench, with poor Stanley hurting his ribs and Kosi just so not there in the game. He disappeared

again after a few good, confident weeks. He's either hurt or something else happened. We had not big man on the ground when poor Ben had his broken nose bandaged. Wilkes was rucking, with a little from Gilbert and even Lenny. Very bleak from up in the gods where we sat in the Saints away game. Surrounded by happy, luxuriating, Cats supporters.

Amanda felt all game we could win, and was almost justified in her belief until we got crushed like a bug in the last 15 minutes of the game. I stopped writing down the last few Cats goals and completely ignored the end score line. We were walloped.

But I did sms DD to see how he was managing the loss and he was with John Harms and so we arranged that Rina and I would meet the boys in the Victory Room for a drink while Amanda went home with Bob and Gary. The arrangements suited all. We needed an end of the season drink with mates, and they needed to get home and sleep.

Rina and I found ourselves surrounded by a friendly pack of Cats (and DD), and enjoyed the company and the drink and talking about footy and the amazing Cats. I said to John that I think I'm suffering the Stockholm Syndrome, where you fall in love with your captors. It's just that since joining the Almanac mob it's felt like I've joined the Cattery somewhat. All these great blokes, all these good mates, and most are Geelong supporters. And now the Saints are effectively out, Rina and I find ourselves leaning to the Cats and hoping they push on. Unlikely, but we have diverted ourselves to at least support our friends. I even wouldn't be too fussed with the Pies winning, they have our beloved Robert Harvey and I think Nathan Buckley is doing a fine job and Scotty Watters came from that tribe not that long ago. And I think he's bought with him some very Collingwood ideas. God help me, becoming enamoured of Geelong and Collingwood, Adelaide and Sydney. I passed an Alzheimer's Test this week with flying colours, so I can't blame that...

3. Partying On

I find on this Saturday morning, I'm OK with the thought of no finals for the Saints in 2012. It's time to have a good long break, an extra few weeks for the boys to enjoy Nick's wedding, to heal, recover and watch with interest in this strange footy year, who will win and who will lose. And which coaches will keep their job and who will go. Who will leave their sides and who will stay. We can watch the Grand Final with an insider's understanding of the stress and expectation, and not have the nervous, sleepless nights. We can watch others go through the merry-go-round. We can write and I can paint and cartoon away the next few weeks and months. I can even play and fool and ring SEN at 7am and sing the Saints song in Swedish to join in the fun (and be heard by Amanda and a friend of my uncle Bob). I can watch others party and I'm OK with that. I still want to flog the Blues in two weeks, and Greater Western Sydney next week. But for the rest, well, we'll see.

Yvette Wroby

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