

Joining the Delusion....We can do this, too

I've been hanging around with the Geelong Cat boys too much. Their mindset is beginning to rub off on me. I was quite happy hanging in the Saints reality of seeing this year as essentially over and beginning to build up for next year. But Flynny's chant of "We can do this" has resonated via Wynyard to Melbourne, from Cats to now this Sainter. I'm not even basing this on the Saints form, after all, we did play Greater Western Sydney and a depleted side at that. We were also depleted with no Riewoldt, Kosi, Schneider, Armitage and Fisher.

But I liked what I saw. I liked the run of the new boys :Saad continuing his idiosyncronitics walk ups to goals, his brave marking and tackling, his speed and intensity. I love Siposs's long, accurate pin point kicks and good marks and "I can do this" play. I like McEvoy's strength and experience, Ledgers courage and speed, Newnes hardness and confidence, Stanley's speed and marking and goaling, Mileras touch and accuracy and footy nous and three goals, Cripps's movement and directions and goal kicking and Wilkes tough, more flexible body in our forward line.

I liked Milnes role as Captain for the "Fans round", his five good goals, his brilliant unexpected speckky in the Saints defensive area and the resulting passes and goal. I liked Goddard playing in the forward more, being a good accurate passer of the ball and using his strength and body in competition. I liked his three goals too. I liked Stevens 50th game, his speed and his determination. I always love Lenny, he gives his all until he was subbed off at half time to give our sub and new boy Sebastian Ross a place to find his feet. I liked Leigh Montagna stepping up yet again with two goals but a brilliant effort in defence, the middle and forward. I liked Geary's increased effort and intensity and confidence. Perhaps something has shifted for him this year as well, he seems to have stepped up a notch. I love Gilbert's dramatic attention to opposition, for working hard in defence and pushing the ball forward. I love Farren Rays speed and pressure and commitment. I love Dempster really finding his place in this group and his skills and courage are growing. I loved that Del Santo felt more in control and his goal too. I love Simpkins growing strength and confidence in defence, and Gwilt regaining confidence and speed.

I like the Saints administrations attempts to open up to the fans more, though I'd like to give them a few hints on basic organisation...like let us know that when we rock up for a Legends Game at 11.15 on Game Day, we can only use Gate 2 as an entrance. If it wasn't for a kind Saints family letting us all know at the other gates, we'd still be sitting there wondering what was going on. I would have liked the few hundred fans who made that extra effort to get to the ground to be let in before the Legend game kicked off. I'd like to see more of Shane Warne, because he (along with Max H and Aaron H) were the few Legends I recognised.

I liked to have that extra little bit of love and attention and pre-thought when they have good ideas. Like asking Saints members to register to be part of a Saints supporters march onto the Ground for "Thank the Supporter Round". I put myself down for it. I got selected! We all met at the freezing Gate 4 at 1pm, gathered as the organisers organised themselves, were led onto the ground and down a ramp, there to wait until all the players warming up left the ground, and then to be led, quite boring-ly, along the boundary, through a lame banner thanking supporters, and down another ramp to find our way back to our seats. Now, this could have been improved out of sight by one easy suggestion: get us to sing "Oh When the Saints" as we stood there, really get us to belt it out, and then get us to sing it and lead the stadium to sing it, as we did the few minutes walk. They could have let this group also stand in line to welcome the boys onto the field to run through their real banner, and made our group extremely happy. Maybe next year.

I'd organised Rina to have the camera and wore my most identifiable red, white and black knitted beany so I could find myself. I needn't have bothered. It wasn't covered on the coverage. Like I

said, it was all a bit flat.

I would like it acknowledged that the "The Thankyou" gournseys were paid for by the members themselves, \$250 for the honour of having their name on it. For that they got the jumper. I just figured a thankyou shouldn't involve a price that the "thanked" person has to pay. It just seems a little up side down. We got to buy our hats, t-shirts and scarfs for 2012, and then this...just saying...

I wondered about there being only 17,327 mostly Saints fans at this last home game of the year. Where was everybody? I know it was never going to be a spectacular game, but it was our last homey for the season and we did put on a display of goal kicking. There were 30 goals kicked for the game, 25 of them ours.

I liked there not being big queues for the toilet because of the small crowd, and the ease of getting a train and seat because of the small crowd.

I liked what I saw of Greater Western Sydney. They have some tough young players. Callan Ward, Adam Treloar, Toby Green is a tough one, right in the centre of the action, Taylor Adams, Rhys Cooyou. Poor Nick Haynes was on Goddard. I liked the run and speed of the game with the young ones. The baby Saints and the baby Giants. I loved the Monks, the orange people, who were bright and cheerful and noisy and visible in colour and noise. Supporters having fun with their new team and dressing up, and the fact that their colours are new to the AFL competition. I liked that they kicked two quick goals in the first quarter to show they were there to play. I liked that they played with confidence, even when being thumped. Perhaps they are getting used to it and still remaining proud. I like that a lot.

And then I liked that Amanda was crazy enough and loyal enough to come early with me for the Legends game which was a snore for her, and that Rina came back to my place to continue the party and watch Sydney go down to a very strong Hawthorn, before watching a troubled Collingwood go down to West Coast Eagle, note Brisbane beating Port in Adelaide, and see the shock of the round with Carlton being downed, convincingly, by Gold Coast Suns.

By then, I'd watched 12 hours of football one way or another, the last few hours in the comfort of my lounge, take-away dinner and dessert eaten, daughter dropped at friends, and left to our own devises until the siren of the Carlton game, when delusion hit home. We get to play them (Carlton) next week. I'd been worried, and now, if Gold Coast can do it with their young-uns, why can't we? And if, goes the delusion in its second step, North Melbourne beat Fremantle, and (this is when Rina lost patience with me and decided I needed to turn off the TV and go to bed), Melbourne to beat Adelaide in Melbourne and then beat Fremantle next week in Western Australia, we are back in the 8 and it's such a weird year, who knows. Well, once I got to this point of the evening, it was time to call it quits. At least when Cats supporters are delusional, there's some form behind it.

My brand of Saints delusion didn't even last 24 hours. By the end of the weekend, Fremantle thumped North leaving them lower in the ladder and shattered in spirits. Melbourne didn't pull off a miracle win and Adelaide thumped them as well. And the mighty Cats...well, the Bulldogs at least looked spirited and their new young man Jong kicked his first goal after a terrific grab. So back to feet up and enjoying the wierdest season I remember, ever. At least Rina isn't an "I told you so" kind of friend. And my delusion only momentary. And mostly around my beloved Saints.

Yvette Wroby
Sunday 26th August.