

St.Kilda versus Port Adelaide

Saturday 29th July 2013 7.40pm

Etihad Stadium

We won the Toss

It wasn't just our footy family that were a bit short on numbers. The crowds were well down, meaning those who came were very keen. It was cold, dark and raining. I was already excited when we won the toss, Rina laughing at my enthusiasm.

Port Adelaide's banner read:

"Port Adelaide, Solid as a rock,

Giving the Saints, A Hell of a shock"

Saints' read:

"The Power are here, Hoping to win

But they don't know, Saints will march in."

We didn't have to wait long to see whose banner predicted the truth. Port jumped us in the dark. They mugged us good and proper, their first goal within 80 seconds and the next, 3 minutes 20 seconds in, both from Butcher. Riewoldt and McEvoy steadied the ship (with Robertson seemingly everywhere and a fabulous mark from McEvoy) but it was in illusion and I wanted to go back to the toss. Port went on to belt us with 5 more goals, Plttard (after turnover), then Lobbe (from fend off and 50 metre free), Westoff (a mistake and a tackle with no power), Shulz (not being able to hold marks and cover all the Port boys), and Wingard (from a poor kick in). The last five goals were all from mistakes from our young and new players. Who are these Port blokes? They ran past us and just laughed in our faces with goal after goal. We, and our boys, were just a little shocked, like their banner said. We also missed two sitters in front of goal.

The second quarter wasn't much better, Monfries (marking in the centre of 3 Saints) again goaling moments in, Wingard (turnover) getting his second and we slunk into our seats. The score was 14-60. But something began to change, we began to defend, Port started to make mistakes, and then we began to attack. Our seniors started to step up. Lenny. Ray. Milne. Montagna. Dal Santo. And McEvoy marks beautifully in front of goal, after steadier play, the first goal since 10 minutes into the first quarter. Riewoldt misses in front of goal and Port attack again through Gray, he doesn't miss. Tom Jonas flattens my new love Dylan Robertson. His concussion kicks in at half time, he's lost his headband and he's confused. Lenny gets a short pass from Dal and kicks an awesome, much needed, improbable goal. Tackle stats of Saints – Lenny and Armitage doing almost half of the 31. At half time, Port are 38 points ahead. Dylan is subbed off.

We refresh ourselves and wonder what they can put in the cool-aid for the Saints. I am impressed with Port Adelaide. With their new coach Ken Hinkley, almost the whole team are starring. They are young and strong and have a sniff of a victory. They want to go into the eight. We just want a fourth win. I ask cousin Gary, what do the Saints need to do. He says, we need to go back to basics, move it quickly, kick it to where our forwards aren't outnumbered. Maybe the boys heard his advice.

Tom Curren comes in for Robertson and plays his first game. I realise I have to learn all my numbers again, we have so many new boys. Two quick points to Port as they keep attacking but they are not as clean. Curren gets his first touch. Gwilt kicks perfectly and Lee marks it very well, and more importantly, kicks straight. We are only 35 points down. Riewoldt gets a fifty from being shoved into the fence, and goals it. We begin the stamping of our feet. We're alive. Two goals in a row.

Twenty-nine the difference. After a dribble attempt from Rooley, 28. Another attack on goal by Riewoldt brings a mark to McEvoy and an around the body goal. Only 22 the difference. We are laughing and clapping and we are happy. We are playing fast and accurately. We poke it man to man, by foot and by hand. Riewoldt marks again but it is punched away. That makes 21. We get possession again. Saunders attempts out of a pack, 20 points. It's our turn to confuse, to tackle harder, to pressure. Mitchell is subbed on for Neade and get Ports next goal. Saunders crunched in a tackle. Back to 26 points the difference. Saints clear again and we speed forward, Rooley doesn't get paid a mark but Jack Stevens takes it from the ball up and goals. Back to 20. We are hugging and sniffing the air for our old companion – hope...Steven is possessed. The defence is amazing, the pressure great, it is up in our forward. We put so much pressure we get possession back and Milne steals a goal. We are only 13 points down. All the young ones have stepped up, Newnes, Webster, Saunders, Curren. We are cheering and loving our boys as the siren goes.

Armitage gets a lucky free and doesn't convert. It is 12 points. Hickey marks, out of bounds on the full. Interchange infringement when Lenny and Saunders come onto ground together, and Westoff gets a 50 and misses. The momentum changes anyway. Lenny scores a point. Dennis-Lane, another point. Eleven points. Too many misses that could have been goals, another point, a poster. Westoff goals after good fast movement to their forward. Back to 16 points. Down our forward again, Jack Steven again kicks a goal, back to 10. We are beside ourselves. Could we steal this match? Not according to Butcher who steps up when his team needs him, 16 again. Saints have gone forward 7 times for one goal. Port, 3 times for 2 goals. This is where we will lose the game. Steven kicks his third after a steal from the centre, three bounces and through the centre. Back to 10. Riewoldt then misses a sitter from directly in front. We've lost Armitage to a head knock. Riewoldt marks in defence and keeps the ball in our forward and gets it to Lee, from such a tight angle, and he does it. We are three points down. The stamping and the clapping and the cheering. We are having a way better time than expected. Had we been accurate, we'd be 5 goals ahead. Then a miracle. Tom Curren ends his debut with a goal and a review, we watch as it had been called as a goal and is then confirmed as a goal. We scream. We hug. We are ahead by 3. Can we keep this lead? Ten minutes to go.

But Port have switched back on, pass by pass, Stanley tries to run him down and gets his heel, and then a poor free kick paid as well as a 50 metres, and Pittard goals and they are ahead by 3. Saints push forward again. Riewoldt marks, Stanley's mark gets cut off and Port are racing forward again. The game is now a scramble. Another free for Monfries to Mitchell to Westoff, point. Can we keep possession, 6 minutes to go. Riewoldt out of bounds. Port begin to slow the game down. They begin short passes, controlling possession. We know we have lost. We can feel it. Umpire decisions are going against us, and Port misses another.

They are out on their feet, exhausted. It is down Ports end. Every ball is fought for, another free to Port. Gray has ball again but misses his fourth for the night. They scrap for another 3 minutes but there are no more scores, and we feel that is the most honourable of losses. Westoff defends what we had hoped would be the chance to change the results, twice. We have been entertained and excited and thrilled to our back teeth. We are glimpsing a future as the seconds tick down.

Rinas' friends text her we were robbed by free kicks, DD texts "Results not overly important right now, but effort and character is, and we got that from a dire position. Happy." My daughter texted: Waaaaaaa with many unhappy faces. Me, I am practical. If we had kicked straighter, we'd have our game, even with poor umpiring decisions and our best players being knocked out.

Yvette Wroby

23th July 2013