

Listening to our inner Scotty

Our footy family this week included Sara the Hawk. I figured at least one of my reduced mob would have a smile on the dial at the end of the game. On a very cold Melbourne night, my beloved Saints fought manfully for one full quarter. We felt in it, and deluded, we went into the first break. After that, we were "Hawked". Well and truly squished and the game was as expected. So I scraped the barrel for positives as is my want.

The sushi rolls were great. We were back in our home seats, back at the Dome, and the crowds were low so it was easy to buy a packet of chips and go to the loo. Very low expectations help make these positives.

Our young men are our future, and it was good to see another young one blooded. Minchington, now to be known as Minch, was so full of confidence in his first game. He's smaller than I expected, but looks strong and loves his footy. He even kicked a goal. As a matter of fact, our young ones were our main goal kickers until the return of Adam Schneider after half time, and he was our only multiple goal scorer. We got lots of points though, 14 in all, with our captain Nick being the main contributor. He has lost the strength and accuracy and though he runs his guts out, when he is front of goals we shut our eyes and know that it is unlikely he will get it through. He and Lenny and Montagna and Dempster and Gwilt and Blake and Dal Santo, our old boys, are trying their best but it's just not good enough anymore. There were moments of fabulous, fast play in the first quarter, but only 2 goals, and then a single one for 2nd and 3rd quarter. Schneiders three were our only multiple in the last quarter, and it was too little, too late.

Steven was powerful and fast all night, and I love watching him develop into a fabulous, smart, cheeky player. Saunders was working hard, as was Murdoch and Curren and Newnes. These young boys have a lot of strength but need more, they ran out of steam way to early.

It was interesting to get to watch the Hawks. They were a bit of a worry to themselves early, like the light hadn't been switched on, and their point score card four bigger than the Saints. Roughhead was unbelievable, he only got one behind, and 6 fabulous, strong goals. All their others goals were singles, from Lewis, Hill, Sewell, Smith, Gunston, Breust, Spangher and Grimley. Many of these names I hadn't heard before. No Hodge, no Buddy, so everyone had to step up. And they did.

When we lose games, especially badly, I like to listen to what our Coach Scotty Watters has to say, post-game. There was a long silence while he waited for questions. He didn't look a happy chappy. In fact, he seems to have aged 10 years in a short period at the Saints, but his face softens when he talks of our players. The first question to him was "Started well". He almost laughed, (2 goals 5 points ain't starting that well). The game, he said, was an indication of where we were at, it was a fair reflection. We won the contested ball, as they had targeted. There were problems in the boys' ability to sustain. We played three quarters against a Premiership side. The difficulties are not structural, we have 6 players under 10 games, who ran out of gas. With 3 ,4, 5 pre-seasons you get players who can deliver every minute of the game. We put Curren on Mitchell. There were great signs early but then he was legless. Create more opportunity for Newnes, Murdoch, Webster, we stay down that path. A night like this inspires them, pushes them. They want to improve. "I love working with this group". We found another player in Minchington. It is fantastic that we play 4 tops sides, good for the kids, they can measure themselves against it. There are quite a few injuries that expose us. "I deliberately match young players against the best". It is hardest on seasoned veterans. More from Sandringham who have played 0-10 senior games will go to Sydney. Minchington was only 50% conditioned, by half time he was cramping. They have

to learn. Gwilt was brave to play. It was tough. Schneider is 28, good leadership...Milne, sore calf. This club was in decline for 4 years – in 2010 we tapered. Went down in 2011. Not a lot of fresh blood. “The moment I took on this job my aim was to bring the next group and prepare the next group”.

The building needs to be done. There's no avoiding it or cutting corners. We also have a dreadfully long injury list. It is hard to hear. It is hard to see. But we Sainters are nothing if not patient and even though supporters are speaking with their feet and not coming to home games in any great numbers, my mob are there and like the old brigade of players, just have to help and support and be there for the ride. Is there any other way to be a Saints supporter? Any supporter?

Postscript: Writing this, I watched the Doggies flog Carlton, putting end to the Blues seasons hopes and dreams, and making old Mick super-cranky. Sms-ing Denise, we were both in tears at the end when the Bulldogs showed what was possible after a few pretty terrible years of promoting the young guys and teaching the young guys what is required. I think all the Saints boys need to sit down and see what is possible, what they are aiming for. To watch what the Doggies young pups are achieving. Meanwhile, I get great pleasure watching the Western Bulldogs get better, and will be going to their match next Sunday after the family wake for Jon.

Yvette Wroby

10th August 2013