

We won....

Well, Sandringham Zebras won today against Collingwood seconds, and I'll take that, thanks very much indeed. My last Almanac offering started an email conversation and coaching panel between another Almanacker and Saints supporter and sufferer, DD and myself. He let me know he's a regular follower of Sandringham, so gets to see the young players that I long to see in our Saints line-up. Thus challenged and intrigued, and with a bye this week and no regular game to distract myself with, Zamir and I set off to the Sandringham Footy Oval at the end of Hampton Street, Brighton.

It was a sunny but windy and cold winter's day. Perfect footy weather. The Zebra's wore what I first thought were Hawk colours but on closer examination, they are the yellow and black vertical stripes. We arrived just after the game had begun at 2pm and Zamir kept our spot in the sun while I searched for DD. I walked halfway around the ground and on my return, found him three steps away from where I had begun to look. DD said it was more crowded because of the Collingwood fans. The crowds were usually much smaller for Sandringham games.

I was able to locate DD, as instructed, I was looking for his very large Alsatian and I recognised DD from several Almanac functions. He wore his Sandringham scarf, others were wearing their Saints gear and of course Collingwood, their black and white uniform that haunts us all. DD let me know there was a footy record, so Zamir went to get a hot dog and record and thus armed, I looked up my familiar names. I'd forgotten my St. Kilda membership card which would have allowed us in free, but happily paid the \$10 entry each and \$3 for the programme. We stood up against the fence for the first three quarters.

Being at this ground, and in this position, took me back to my 12+ year old days of going regularly to the footy with my friend Deb, sitting on the fence, taking all our gear, lining up at the gates so we could get in first at Moorabbin (or away grounds all over Melbourne), with our floggers and our food, we were ready for a day at the footy. After games, we used to get autographs in our special autograph books (do autograph books exist anymore?) from the players of our day, and we started going the year after the 1966 Grand-final. Missed by that much....as Maxwell Smart would say.

There were many families and children, footballs, dogs, older supporters well rugged up with their seats and blankets. Many were sitting in the small stand at the Zebra end of the ground, others behind a wonderful huge glass windowed area in the bar, one story above the ground. The Zebras were losing at quarter time, the two teams gathered in their groups surrounded by so many fans, both adults and children, going onto the ground to hear what the coaches were saying. Remember those days? Remember when the kids kicked the footy around before, during the breaks, and after the game? Zebras kicked 5 second quarter goals and looked better. Still very inaccurate. I felt at home.

At half time, Zebras were 6.14.50 and the Pies were 6.4.40. I took lots of photos with my zoom lenses, catching one of Mick Malthouse and Sam Gilbert chatting for about 10 minutes. I'd have loved to be a fly on that invisible wall. I'd seen Mick and his wife but didn't want to intrude with a photo, and spent the whole last quarter standing 2 inches away from Sam and his girl and again, didn't intrude.

Back to the footy. After half time, Collingwood kicked 5 goals to St.Kilda 2 goals two points. Was it the wind, we were getting so many more shots at goal but with little success. We got to watch

Siposs, Simpkin, McWalter, Lynch, Smith, Eddy, Archer, Crocker, Ledger, Winmar, Clarke and Geary, as well as the local boys Marigliani, Lourey, Jetta, Walter, Irving, Magner and others whose numbers I couldn't see across the ground. There were moments of lovely good defensive play from Lynch, and others. Jason Blake retired injured early in the game.

Collingwood lost Eddy to injury and he was stretchered off with the help of medical staff from both teams. We watched Jolly, Blair, Rounds, Keefle, Johnson, Macaffer, Fasalo, Ugle, Seedsman, Farmer, Reilly, Penham, McNamara, Sunderberg and Folino. Again, I'm only listing those whose numbers I could see. At the end of third term, Zebras were 8.16 64 and Pies 11.9 75. It rained at the end of the third quarter and we went up to the club house for shelter, and stayed on the balcony for the last quarter.

Took more photos from this good vantage point. A chappy asked me if I was with a newspaper (I've got a seriously big lens!) and I said no, just for fun. (By the way, does anyone know if punters like me can take my serious camera into regular footy matches?) Anyhow, we were rewarded for staying, as the Zebras ran away in the last quarter with a 7.7 quarter versus a 1.1 quarter for the Pies. I know this makes me sound petty, but gee, it felt good to be barracking for the team kicking so many goals and winning decisively in the end. The final scores were Zebras 15.23 113 and Pies 12.10 82.

We walked back to where DD had been the entire game, said goodbye and see you Wednesday if all goes well, for the Almanac Website launch (or in other words, another excuse to get together, talk footy and writing and life.) We were cold, hungry but happy to see a local game with some of our future stars playing. We walked back to where I'd parked the car, a mere 10 minutes' walk, and another 15 and we were home and warming up.

Just checking the North Melbourne game, they massacred Port Adelaide, and the Saints play them after a bye this week. DD and I concurred that it's been a long long season. Carn the Saints. Carn the Zebras. Let's have a better end of the season. And there's always next year.

Yvette Wroby

Sunday 26th June 2011