

There's life, and then there is football

It was a very unusual beginning of the season. The Sydney round one between Greater Western and Sydney Swans, the week before all the other states and teams got to play. A bit one sided but who cared, footy was back.

And then the games of this weekend, starting off with the runaway from Carlton, the nail biting affair between a depleted Collingwood and a very strong, healthy Hawthorn, Brisbane Lions defeating a perhaps grieving Melbourne mob, a drubbing by NAB winners Adelaide of poor old Gold Coast Suns. The fantastic games and edge of your seat experiences that were the Fremantle/Geelong game and North Melbourne/Essendon game, a four pointer to Fremantle and a two pointer to Essendon.

Come Sunday, my sister found herself miserable at the Western Bulldogs/West Coast Eagles game when the Doggies were drowned by 10 goals. I wasn't feeling good about the Port Adelaide/Saints game on late Sunday afternoon. What a weekend of games. Total drubbings and then neck and neck games where the winner wasn't known until the last moments of the game.

The day started OK with a weird session of Tai Chi with a different teacher for the day and the normal routines and habits were shaken up a bit as all was done just differently enough to be confronting. I then pop around to Mum to change her clocks, she's done them all except the car and the video, so I fix these for her, take out the rubbish, and head home after a chat. The rest of the day there were lots of lists to be made, lots of cleaning up and waiting around to pick up my youngest (our routines missed and she got home on her own) as I had to then go into town to see my last show of the Comedy Festival by the train as the trams were all delayed on my line. I experimented by getting off at Parliament station and found it the quickest route to the Comedy Theatre.

I met my eldest and her friend/work colleague in a Chinese restaurant across the road, where they made themselves sick sharing afternoon tea of sweet chinese desserts. I ate a very early dinner of 4 different variety of dim sims. Beats the ones from the local fish and chips. It was very pleasant sitting there eating and talking and all being on our iphones, they responding to different messages and me checking on how the doggies and my sister and brother in law were going. Not going well. Not happy. Getting unhappier each text.

We were meeting Rachels' other friend at the Comedy Theatre and all seeing Frank Woodley in his latest, "Bemusement Park". After my divorce in 2000, the one consistent was that each year the kids and I would come and see a number of shows during the festival. We've watching Lano and Woodley grow up before our eyes, and be consistently wonderful. We've watched a baby faced Sammy J go from his own small show to hosting this years opening Comedy Gala at the Palais. My daughter saw Hannah Gadsby on Saturday night with my sister. We'd first seen Hannah win at the Raw Comedy Festival goodness knows how long ago. We've watched some overseas comedians or acts, like this years wonderful Wanda Sykes, and many other local shows.

This evening, while the Saint boys slogged it out in South Australia, we watched an hour of Woodley madness and his gifts continue to shine. He is funny and polished but always seems to be making it up on the spot, his audience interactions get woven in and old themes from earlier in the hour are woven in seamlessly later in the show. He's very physical, cerebral and wonderful. After the show, we bought 2 posters for \$10 each and waited in the back of the queue for autographs from Frank Woodley. We chatted and I checked the scores. We're ahead, we're behind.

When it was our turn for autographs, I told Frank the children and I had seen all his combined and individual shows. He looked up and grinned. He has one of the most wonderful faces I have ever seen. I want to paint it. Not on his face, on a canvas.

Rina has left me a message, her father is back in hospital and she will be with him and not watching the replay with me.

We walk back up to Parliament station, the Saints are trailing again but it's close. I keep checking the scores all the way home, and by the time I got in my car and begin the short drive home, it is the last quarter. I sit in the car in my driveway for the last 10 minutes. I can't bear to break from SEN and I listen intently hoping for the miracle last minute moment of victory that never comes. We have lost to Port Adelaide by four points. My intent is to go inside and watch the whole game. At least it wasn't a drubbing.

But once inside, I have wrongly recorded the pre-match stuff and not the game, and at least Fox Sports repeats it at 3.30am so I must be patient and set the recording and look forward to the next day to replay. I feel very disorientated. My uncle Bob is in South Africa with his wife finishing an overseas holiday, he will be back in time for this weeks game against Gold Coast Suns. Rina is caring for her aged, sick parents, and I am alone to ponder the vagaries of life that doesn't wait for football. We couldn't have watched it together this night as planned because I mucked it up.

In the end, I didn't get a chance to sit and watch it until late afternoon, and didn't finish watching it until after dinner and cleaning up. I'd gone to visit Rina's mum to keep her company so she wouldn't worry about her husband. I'd forgotten how intelligent and thoughtful she is and spent the time talking of novels and the past.

So this is what I noticed when I finally watched the game. The Saints are playing slightly differently, being more attacking, using young Stanley a lot in ruck to get him some experience, and then using him in the middle and up forward because of his speed. He does some good and finally he has some strength to go with his speed. He wins few of the tap outs, but enough to begin to find his way. Riewoldt is playing further up the ground, does some good marking and manages a few goals. Kosi is more confident and solid and kicks three straight goals, seems to be in defence, centre and forward at different times. Blake, in his 200<sup>th</sup> game, shows some good form, and then like all the players of both teams, also stuffs up. Milera kicks his first goal and gets some experience with the big boys. He'll be good for us, especially in the absence of Schneider with hamstring woes. I liked Cripps efforts as well, again, as a newby, he misses quite a few but I like the fact that Watters is giving the young fellas a go. I think we missed Dawson in defence (though he could alternatively frustrate the bejesus out of us and I noted he played well for his new club with his old boss). We get some good run at times and go straight up the middle of the ground, and I like that instead of the backwards nonsense.

I also noticed how confident Port Adelaide have become. How hungry and aggressive and they were very good. They just kept coming, even when they were behind. They didn't give up. And they got the points to prove it.

The Saints lost the game, but it's only the first round and we'll get better. We need the fresh legs and a fresh way of looking at the world. And it's a long long season, with 1/3 of the teams looking to have the goods needed for those finals berth. We are not one of them yet.

Yvette Wroby

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