

Walking that fine line...

It's been a week of fine lines...St.Kilda went to Brisbane without Goddard or Stevens, two of our best, who crossed that line. Carlton were beaten by North Friday night. That's a line through their year and perhaps through their coach. Judd again crossed his lines, and we are all left wondering what is in that mans head and make up that he does the most extraordinarily stupid things on the ground. I hope he gets three or more weeks. Richmond drew the line around their game with the Gold Coast Suns and thought they had it, and the Suns stole it within the last minute of that game, when Richmond diddled instead of bombing it into their forward and out of danger. Especially after the goal that put the Suns within four points. Richmond had three players who had crossed their lines through behaviour or injury and were out, leaving them depleted. The Suns stepped up and put a line through their first win of the season. The loss to the Brisbane Lions put a line through their finals ambition. We've all put lines through the Cats season, but they are still in the eight and I have learned NEVER to draw a line through Geelong, they love crossing them and confounding us all.

Lines were drawn early in the Brisbane Lion vs St.Kilda Saints game. It was rough, and tough and lots of incidents that will be looked at in match reviews from the umpires. And from the teams. Lions were there to win, and their determination and rough play was soon matched by St.Kilda. This was no game of pussy-cats. This was at times hard and nasty. Plenty of history. Plenty of footy stories. Plenty of memory. Within a quarter, Rina and I, in the comfort of my footy room, with our feet up, and well fed, were baying for blood in return. Nick Riewoldt gets hammered yet again, and bounces up like an ever-ready battery bunny. Jones is pushed into the fence, and gets up and plays well for the rest of the game. Saints were slow to start, but they had many points to prove. They wanted that eighth spot and played accordingly.

I got to see and know some Brisbane players, Jonathan Brown, what a strong player he is. I now know Daniel Rich from his actions. Dayne Zorko looked good for them. Simon Black, with aging body, showed the sort of determination we are used to in our Lenny. Merritt, hope he gets reported. He is a very good hard footballer. Ben Hudson, an ex-Doggie. How come he is gone from the Western Bulldogs, he wasn't bad. Banfield, very busy, Maguire, an ex-Sainter, keeping our forwards very quiet during the first half of the game. He wasn't playing this way for us in my memory. He was very good in this game. Accurate, confident and classy. Polkinghorne was also very good for the Lions.

Stevens poor behaviour gave an opportunity for Dunell, who at 22 played his first senior game after showing form in Sandringham. It is a good lesson for all. He went to McPhee, Sandringhams Coach and the Saints Development Coach, and asked how he'd have to improve to be selected. McPhee instructed, Dunell did what was asked and was rewarded. Now we have another good young man competing for a spot in the team. He showed great composure for a first gamer. Gwilt still looks uncertain at times, perhaps not fully confident after return from injury. Wilkes was present but was subbed off half time to bring Dunell in. Wilkes wasn't able to show any of last weeks spark and I wonder why he's so inconsistent.

How good is Arryn Siposs. His two games for us, last weeks and this weeks, cements him as a must have. His kicking is mighty, and accurate. He's beautiful in getting the ball up to where it needs to be, our end, and was a good mark and a terrific kick. We Sainters saw a little of this last year, and are relieved to have him fit and back where he belongs. Simpkins is also terrific. His effort is extraordinary, and it's bought a flare and sparkle to our older backline. He does well along with Dempster, Gwilt, Geary and Fischer. They are finally gelling as a defencive unit.

And how does one understand Gilbert, who makes mistake after mistake and all is forgiven when he

then kicks a fabulous goal. Even Lenny, who is usually unbelievable, made several unlikely passes. That's what makes the game of Aussie rules alternately wonderful and dreadful. You cannot imagine what will happen next. It's unpredictable. Surprising. Remarkable. The lead changed ten times in this game, 6 times in the last quarter, just in this game.

Yet more admiration for Clint Jones. He so quietly just gets the job done. Consistently. There is a huge hole when he is not in the team. It felt too unfamiliar. All wrong. Schneider is consistently good, as is Ray and Montagna. Milne was quiet the first half but stepped up the second half. Armitage is always improving. Kosi, according to the commentary, has given away 7 free kicks this season, more than any other player in the AFL. Not a happy record to have. But he also took some great marks, and provided a change in ruck, some competition in marking contests in the forward and in defence. Del Santo just works quietly, you know he's there working away.

Now for pure pleasure. How good was Saad. His three soccer kicks from mid air, his funny thirty steps, his slow walk to where he kicks the ball, gives us great joy and entertainment. He also kicked a beauty from that funny set kick. Four goals by the end of the night. I love watching McEvoy too. He is growing into his role, fabulous marker of the ball, very accurate passer, tough as all out, competitive, hungry but seemingly calm in the face of it all. And our captain Nick Riewoldt. He may have been well held for half the game, but he is always there, always trying, frustrated if he doesn't get as much of the ball as possible. So determined.

I wonder what they put in the Kool-aid at half time. I wonder what Scotty Watters said to our boys. I liked the way he dealt with Stevens during the week, how he emphasised the need for education and support. I feel supremely engaged with St.Kilda with him at the helm. The culture has changed. He is thoughtful and generous and quiet with steely determination. I would not want to have transgressed and have to face him, or my team-mates, with their wish to succeed.

Crossing the Line:

Saints came out at half time determined, but so did the Lions. They kicked a quick goals, but we began to claw back. Saad soccers another. We tackled hard, we defended hard. Dunells first touch was a great running mark. There's too much bombing forward. Gilbert misses a gettable goal. Milne misses from a mark and set short. Even Geary gets a point. We're attacking but missing. Or giving Maguire his tenth mark. Finally, we start scoring through Montagna and the scores are level. Dunell takes a magnificent mark, but sprays it and no added score at all. The only good thing is that we're defending so well, and we have stepped up the attack. Rockcliff gets a free and goals and then Banfield gets one. Suddenly they are twelve points ahead again. And Saad toe pokes yet another. Dunell gets another pass to Milne but a point. Gilbert stuffs up another bad kick from the Lions, but returns the favour with a plonker of his own. Up the other end, McEvoy defends. Dunell kicks another good one. Slowly it goes up the Saints end, for another behind courtesy of a short kick to goal from Milne. Another stupendous kick from Siposs with Milne taking an incredible mark, and we're one point ahead at three quarter time.

Lions come out firing with a quick goal from Merrett and one from Bewick after a repeated effort which wins him a free. Saints all feel a collective panic attack coming on. How can we face a rampaging Sydney Swans with a defeat against Brisbane Lions. I like seeing Riewoldt further up the field, helping defend from the centre. Just to shake things up for both him and the team. Riewoldt gets a free in front of goals from being held and scores his first. Lions substitute Karnezis goals after Del Santo gets a knee crunch in the centre. Saints need something. Some slower, more accurate kicking, man to man, gets it to Saints forward again. Saints are 11 points down and we're half way through the final quarter. But a second captains goal from mistakes from Brisbane gives Riewoldt his second and Saints are only 5 points down. Thankfully, Lions are starting to make

more mistakes. In Saints forward, lots of mistakes but it's down the right end. Armitage snaps one from a bounce and the scores are yet again, even. Merrick, Banford, Zorko, all pushing forward. The Tigers/Suns match showed us just how much can happen in a few minutes. There is only 10 left and the Lions just can't put us away.

But the Saints are coming, and Gilbert goals from the 50 metre mark, making up for all that has gone before. Saints are now ahead by 5 points when Simon Black goals and the lead swaps yet again. We are dizzy from the changes on the scoreboard.

Hayes gets it forward, Milne does a Milne and the Saints lead again. It started to rain at the Gabba. Lenny again pushes it forward and Siposs takes a spectacular mark with eyes on the ball. There's Lenny's name on the two goals that win us the game. Siposs goals and Saints lead by 11. Can we hold on. With a game like this, and after earlier games, we hope we've taken the lesson. Dempster defends well, as he has all night, gets it to our forward but we turn it over, then they turn it over, then we do, and then they do. It is that type of 4 minute play. Again, Lenny is central in both defence and attack. He is just plain CENTRAL. Siposs gets a behind. At least its up our end most of the time. Del Santo scores another point and then it's all over and the Saints have won. We are happy, they are disappointed. We get the four points, the top eight position and practice at winning two in a row. Can we possibly make it three? After Sydneys defeat of the West Coast Eagles the day after, we are all left to wonder. Will they bring that kind of performance next week. And what will we bring. Can we cross another line. What a weekend of football.

Saints have at least drawn a line in the sand as our advertising of this year has asked the supporters to do. We all wait for another long week for round17 for the last 6 rounds of the season. The Swans need the recognition of how quietly, determinedly, and forcefully, take top spot. Lets hope they have a rubbish week next week.

We can only hope.

Yvette Wroby
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