Fitzroy V Banyule, round 13, 2009

Fitzroy have bowed out of the finals race following a much anticipated match of the round on Sunday. Banyule scorched to a six goal lead by half time but, stirred into action, the Roys bounced back strongly and outscored the top team in a fine second half.

In the first half, the dependability and attacking flair of half backs Nathan Ligris and Nick McMahon were on show again. Both collected numerous possessions and provided creativity in the back half, not to mention blind courage against bigger bodied opponents. With Patrick outstanding in his most impressive game of the season, our half back line held their own against the flood of numbers from a committed opponent.

Under extreme pressure, Jake intercepted the footy superbly and held the full back line together. Dieter ran hard, applying excellent pressure, Ben McGregor tackled ferociously and stopped his opponent while Trevor took a wonderful pack mark in a pleasing performance.

Nevertheless, our inability to stick to the game plan drilled into us at training and (player developed) team rules meant key playmakers could not get into the game throughout a difficult first half.

Our second half was an entirely different matter. Rodger had already taken the honours in his first half duel with a terrific opponent but he took his game to another level in the second. His work rate was inspired as he marked brilliantly and drove the ball forward at will. We saw Sam at his bullocking best as he was freed of the shackles of previous weeks and David Herbert gave us the flexibility we needed to counter our opponents in defence and in the midfield.

Nick Gibbons was again courageous and prolific. He combined wonderfully with Joseph who was able to feed out numerous possessions from the bottom of packs. This is most unusual as it is usually the more vertically challenged players who end up at the bottom of those packs.

At centre half forward, Nathan Filieri held a disciplined, team oriented line and was eventually rewarded with valuable possessions. Dean was also instrumental in the excellent second half team performance. He appeared to enjoy the freedom of half forward and combined beautifully with the hard working Dom and Peter and the constructive John.

Liam again showed why his injury was such a cruel blow to our efforts in 2009. He simply runs hard to attack when we have the ball and again to pick up his oppenent when the opposition have it; it’s a very simple game really. Elsewhere, Calum and Tom were both excellent. They either kicked goals or set them up by competing strongly to outmanoeuvre threatening opponents and using their foot-skills to hit targets further afield.

Up forward, Laurie was dangerous while Abraham and Ben Rickard applied excellent pressure, forcing their opponents to panic and turn the ball over.

Once again, however, the Roys have been defeated after giving their best for less than four quarters of footy. Of course, the football played in the second half was wonderful to watch and perhaps this is where we need to focus our attention.

P.S.

In an interesting aside, according to the Laws of Australian Football, 2009, relating to what spectators often refer to as ‘holding the ball’, the following rule is outlined:

***“15.2.4 Application — Specific Instances where Play shall Continue***

*For the avoidance of doubt, the field Umpire shall allow play to continue when:*

*(a) a Player is bumped and the football falls from the player’s hands;*

*(b) a Player’s arm is knocked which causes the Player to lose possession of the football;”*

There might be a witness or two to a small wager (not that we condone that sort of thing at Fitzroy) that may or may not have occurred in the final quarter near the interchange bench in relation to this rule...?