**EXCELLENT WINS TO THE PORT AND STORM**

In an extremely exciting but nerve-racking day of football last Saturday at Claremont, both the ‘Cygnet Community Bank Football Club’ Seniors and the Southern Storm Colts scored excellent wins in their Qualifying Finals to secure a Second Semi-Final berth this week.

**COLTS**

After a year’s absence from the SFL Colts competition, the Southern Storm boys have made steady progress this season under the strong guidance of Coaches, Matty Brereton and ‘Squid’ Gordon. Their third position on the ladder pitted them against second-placed Brighton in the Qualifying Final last Saturday, and another strong and even contest was predicted.

Brighton opened the game brightly and were quickly on the scoreboard, scoring four first quarter goals to the Storm’s two goals, to lead by two goals at the first break. The Storm started to work their way back into the game in the second quarter with Jack Brereton winning the ruck contests, Nathan Duggan leading the on-ball brigade and Jake Dance and Jake Munnings proving a head-ache for the Brighton defence. The margin at half-time was only four points and another close game looked likely.

The third half opened up with Brighton moving the ball quickly and half way through the quarter the Robins had extended their lead to 17 points and looked to have control of the game. However, the Storm were not to be outdone, and a burst of three quick goals late in the quarter gave them a two point lead at three quarter time and an exciting final quarter beckoned. The Storm were immediately in attack and scored the first goal of the last quarter to open up an eight point lead. Brighton immediately hit back with a goal of their own as both sides battled to gain possession and score. It was a tense affair for both players and spectators as the two teams went goal for goal, however the Storm held on gamely to run out winners by eight points in what was an excellent game of football.

Better players in an even Storm side were Nathan Duggan, Jack Brereton, Peter O’Neill, Campbell Gane, Jake Munnings and Bailey Gordon. Goal sneak, Jake Dance continued his excellent form booting four goals, while Joe Direen and Jake Munnings each kicked two, with single goals to Nathan Duggan, Brandon Lane, Jack Bester and Bailey Gordon.

**SENIORS**

The Port Seniors were keen to make the most of their first final’s appearance in ten years and were quietly confident that if they played their running team game and moved the ball quickly to their key forwards they could really challenge the reigning premiers, Claremont.

The Port got off to a very good start, with several centre clearances giving our key forwards every opportunity in one-out contests. Jason Laycock was ‘clunking’ everything that came his way and kicked three goals for the term. He was well assisted by Ben Halton and Pud Darcy who were both marking strongly and kicking accurately. A five goal first quarter had the Port up by ten points at quarter time, but Claremont were looking ever-threatening, particularly whenever they got open and could use the wide open expanses of Abbotsfield Park.

The second quarter couldn’t have started any better for the Port, with Jake Brereton winning the tap from the first bounce straight to Sam Dean then onto Brayden Hayes and a goal, all within the first ten seconds. This started a scoring avalanche with Cygnet piling on a further seven goals for the quarter (including two each to Halton and Darcy) to Claremont’s five goals to extend their lead to 26 points at half time. Even with this four goal plus lead, the Port supporters were not getting carried away and were wondering not whether, but when Claremont would hit their ‘go’ button.

It was therefore no surprise that the Magpies came out all guns blazing in the third term with their captain, Nathan Brown running amok and showing why he was the competition’s best and fairest winner last year. Claremont booted seven goals for the quarter, but a late goal off the ground from Ben Halton and an immediate free-kick goal to Gavin Quirk steadied the Port ship. The difference was down to only three points with a quarter to go, but unfortunately Cygnet’s big ruckman Gerard Brereton suffered a serious knee injury during the quarter and could take no further part in the game.

With Jake Brereton getting on top in the ruck and giving his onballers first use of the ball, the Port boys found another gear in the final quarter, with Ben ‘Bunsen’ Halton and Jason Laycock winning their one-out contests, proving the old adage that ‘as the game goes on the big men don’t get any smaller’! Cygnet were able to grab the ascendancy and run out comfortable winners by 32 points, in what was probably the Port’s most exciting and memorable win in recent years.

In what was an excellent overall team performance, Coach Gavin Quirk lead from the front in probably his best game for the Club, whilst the twin towers of Ben Halton (8 goals) and Jason Laycock (7 goals) were both magnificent all day and proved too big and strong for their opposition defenders. Jake Brereton won the ruck contests and took several good marks around the ground, whilst Sam Dean and Brayden Hayes seized many of the hard balls and continually broke away driving the ball long to the key forwards. Haysey’s bouncing run off half back through the middle of the ground which resulted in a Port goal was one of the game’s highlights.

Other goal scorers were Pud Darcy (3), Brayden Hayes (2), with singles to Toby Cowen, Elliot Ross and Gav Quirk.

**THIS WEEK’S SECOND SEMI-FINAL GAMES**

This week both the Senior and Colts teams front up against their respective top-ranked teams in their Second Semi-Finals. The Southern Storm Colts will play Claremont at Abbotsfield Park, with the game starting at 9.30am.

The Cygnet Seniors will then take on Lindisfarne at Anzac Park with a 2pm start. The game will importantly celebrate the 150th senior game for Cygnet’s champion player and five-times Best and Fairest winner, Brad Watson. Congratulations Brad on overcoming serious injury to achieve this wonderful milestone.

In another important milestone, it will also be the 150th Club game for Ben Halton. Well done Ben, and aren’t we glad to have you back in the Port colours!

Make sure you get along this week to watch both games, as if they are anywhere near as exciting as last Saturday’s games, then it promises to be another great day at the footy.

**BEST AND FAIREST WINNERS**

The Club conducted its Best and Fairest counting last Saturday night with congratulations going to this year’s well-deserving winners, Ben Halton (Seniors), Tom Slevin (Reserves) and Nathan Duggan (Colts). The respective runners-up were Will Ford (Seniors), Darcy Millhouse and Paddy Wilcox (joint Reserves) and Joe Direen (Colts).

Ben Halton and Will Ford tied for the prestigious Synnott Brothers Award, with 31 votes each.

Many thanks to John Synnott for once again preparing an excellent presentation of the round by round votes. Full details of all the votes can be found on the Club’s website (cygnetfc.com.au).

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