**PORT CLUB NOTES**

The Port’s 2018 season kicked off at Cygnet on Good Friday with four games against Claremont, in front of a large crowd. After an early morning shower threatened to make the lush surface slippery, conditions improved during the day, although the variable wind made things interesting, particularly during the senior game.

Colts

It was a new-look Southern Storm Colts, with several players coming up from the Storm Under 16’s and a number of new faces joining the team, along with new Coaches Daniel Webster and Paddy O’Neill. The Storm hit the ground running and had all of the play in their forward half in the first quarter. They moved the ball quickly giving their forwards every opportunity, and with first-gamer Philip Bastick providing a key target, the Storm peppered the goals and opened up a 34 point lead at quarter time. The Storm continued to run the ball well with linking handballs and pinpoint passes to an open forward line. Claremont were battling hard but had no answer to the Storm’s run and carry and with four goals in the second term and a further eight goals in the second half, the Storm ran out comfortable winners by 114 points, in what was a great start to their season.

Philip Bastick finished the game with 6 goals, James Zeitzen was the other multiple goal kicker with 3 goals, with single goals to Jake Munnings, Connor Soward, Blake Sculthorpe, Noah Clifford, Brayden Dowling, Reece Scotland, Will Polley and Josh Coad.

Better players in an excellent team effort were Philip Bastick, Scott Blacklow, first-gamer Noah Clifford, Will Polley who dominated the ruck contests all day, George O’Neill and Reece Scotland.

Reserves

The Port Reserves, with several of last year’s Storm Colts having their first hit-out of senior football, were keen to get off to a good start. However their Claremont opponents had other ideas and the magpies’ player depth and fitness was soon very evident. Claremont hit the scoreboard regularly while the Port were struggling to get a major on the board, and the visitors led by 25 points at the first break. Claremont booted four more goals in the second quarter to hold a comfortable nine goal lead at half-time. Unfortunately the Port’s woes continued in the second half with Claremont booting ten goals while keeping the Port goalless.

Marcus Coulson, Jack Bester, captain Darcy Millhouse, Jacob Hayers, Sean Burgess and the veteran Phil Dance all put in strong efforts, but it was to no avail as Claremont ran out comprehensive victors by 127 points.

Seniors

The first quarter of the Senior game was an even affair, with both defensive lines doing well under plenty of pressure. Our four debutants started well with Peter O’Neill, Campbell Gane, Jack Brereton and Jason Shaw all getting their hands on the ball early. Unfortunately we lost Andrew Palmer half way through the first quarter with a hamstring injury and with two goals each for the quarter, Claremont held a slender 4 point lead at quarter time.

With the wind swirling around from end to end during the first half, the second quarter saw the experience of the Magpies shine through, with the ball coming into their forward line quickly and putting immense pressure on our defenders. A move into the midfield saw Ben Halton have an immediate impact on the game, but a five goals to two second quarter had the Magpies up by five goals at half-time.

Poor disposal was really letting the Port down, and when we lost Matt Turnbull at the start of the third quarter also with a hamstring injury, our bench rotations decreased and the players started to struggle fitness wise. We had plenty of opportunities in the third quarter but were very wasteful in front of goal, kicking seven straight behinds to Claremont’s five goals, and the margin was out to nine goals at the final break.

Despite having a quiet first three quarters in the forward line, a move to defence saw Will Ford have an impact on the game. Pat Verrell played his defensive tagging role well on some very experienced opponents. Despite Port winning their fair share of the rucking contests, the experienced Magpies midfielders were able to win more than their share of the centre clearances. In the final term Claremont more than matched the Port’s three goals with six goals of their own to record a comfortable 72 point victory.

Joe Direen won a fair share of the ruck contests and the very robust Tom Slevin was close checking all day and provided many long runs out of defence, with his big raking boot a feature. Toby Cowen and Jackson Gordon provided plenty of run within the very busy midfield and as expected, Coach Ben Cato lead by example, encouraging his players at every opportunity.

Kane Nielsen booted 2 goals for the Port with single goals scored by Joe Direen, Peter O’Neill, Rhys Jennings and Elijah Reardon.

Women

Everyone was excited and nervous for the Port Women’s first home game under new Coach, Renee Schuettpelz, as they ran out on to the ground displaying their new jumpers. A big crowd had stayed on following the senior game to watch the women’s game at the nicer end of the day.

Claremont jumped away to a fast start and were continually putting the Port’s defence under pressure. In a low scoring first quarter, Claremont kicked two goals to the Port’s one goal to lead by a straight kick at the first break. The second quarter saw several heavy contests with our Port ladies coming off second best, but they continued to put their bodies on the line and as the nerves settled they started to pull back the Magpies’ lead and limited the opposition’s scoring opportunities.

With their new line up and help from the Under 17 girls, they stood up to a beating from Claremont. The backline worked hard to stop the barrage of attempts at goals by either diverting to points or getting the ball back out to the centre. The Port womens’ courage and stubbornness was evident as they pulled together to kick two goals in both the third and final quarters to finally lose by 9 points, with Ash Munnings kicking a goal after the final siren.

Other goal kickers were Chantelle Clark, Emily Direen, Taylah Darwin, Samantha Kluga while better players in a fine first-up team effort were Emily Direen, captain Michelle Cowen, Tara Slater, Taylah Dillon and Serena Hubert.

This week’s Games

This Saturday the Port Men’s teams travel to Pembroke Park to take on the much improved Sorell, who are coming off big first round wins against Brighton.

The Port Women will play the North Hobart Demons at New Town Oval on Sunday (8th April), with the game commencing at 2.30pm.

The Club wished to thank its wonderful sponsors and volunteers who enable the Port to remain viable and sustainable despite the increasing pressure on smaller country football Clubs.

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