



Footy Department Report

CONFIDENTIAL: From the desk of *The Insider*

Round 6 Under 11 White

On Sunday 22nd May our Surrey Park Panthers U11s White travelled to the home of the Preston Bullants. As I drove past the Beirut Hellenic Bank around the corner from the ground I could just sense that I wasn't in Surrey Hills any more. A blustery day with the possibility of showers and a full-sized VFL ground would be a big challenge, but not as big a challenge as the one that confronted 'Smooth' Zac Mulholland, who had agreed to leave a gift of a special brownie in Mitch Robinson's locker if we could locate it.

The 1st Quarter was a tough slog, pushing into what felt like a 5 goal breeze, and we all knew how important it was going to be to not concede early goals as we'd done the previous week. With a couple of our young guns, in Jamie 'Jet' Ridd and 'Mad' Max Inglis warming the pine alongside key defender Ryan 'Rock' Campbell it was going to take a special effort to contain Preston's big bodied boys with their 'take no prisoners' approach. We summoned that special effort though, with 'Pepsi' Max Dryden enthusiastically adopting a game style later described by the coach as 'not pretty, but effective' to combine with 'Buckets' O'Neill's strong marking, Jack 'Tackle' McLaren's intensity at the ball carrier, and Josh 'Curly' Southwood & Ali 'Fitzy' Fitzgerald's run from deep in defense to repel the marauding hordes. Long kicks with the wind were taking Preston deep into their forward line, but our desperate defensive group continued to deny them. A break from across Half Back by Hamish 'Hammer' Sutherland, linked up with 'Smooth' and Brandon 'Crash' Soussa and we'd quickly transferred the play deep into our forward line where Parker 'DA' Fox blazed away and missed narrowly for us to hold an early lead. Late in the quarter a breakdown deep in defence, with nobody on the goal line, saw an ugly mongrel punt tumble across for a falafel roll with tzatziki and the Bullants took the lead. 'Crash' won the clearance at the next centre bounce to combine with 'Smooth' & Tommy 'Macca' McDonald in a lovely display of handballing that propelled the ball forward to the lively 'DA' Fox who just

failed to register our first goal as the wind grabbed his kick late. We trailed the Bullants by a goal at the first break: 1.2 (8) to 0.2 (2).

The 2nd Quarter was our turn to kick with the wind. Or was it? Frustratingly the breeze dropped away during the break, and our advantage was gone. Still, we managed to dominate the quarter, spending most of it in our forward line as Preston had before us. 'DA', 'Tackle', 'Crash' and Tommy 'Chooka' Shevlin were desperate through the middle of the ground, pumping it forward where the big hands of 'Buckets' marked strongly again. 'Jumpin' Joshy Ward was tackling hard across Half Forward, dispossessing a Bullant then hitting up a fast-leading 'Killer' Caen Minett inside 50 with a pinpoint pass. We looked the better team, but lost a bit of focus when 'Jet' was slung in a nasty tackle and had the stuffing knocked out of him. We held our collective breath as he staggered off the ground, but after a few deep breaths and a quick cuddle from Dad he was ready to go again – in fact he wanted to go back on right away! We breed 'em tough down Surrey Park way. 'Pepsi' Max then started a chain with a strong clearance from deep in defence that found its way to the silky 'Macca' on the half forward flank. 'Macca' was sublime as he beat three opponents and pumped it into the goal square where 'DA' gathered and goaled. We went into the long break with the match all tied up: 1.3 (9) vs 1.3 (9)

I'm not sure what it is about the half time break (I'm ruling out the oranges) but it agrees with us as a team. In the 3rd Quarter we again demonstrated, as we did last week, that we're capable of kicking it up into another gear. With 'Hammer' into the Ruck, and 'Mad' Max, 'Tich' Tutty & 'Killer' Minett in the middle we surged forward constantly but just couldn't find the goals we needed to seal a victory. From a big pack mark (a contender for Mark of the Year!) by 'Jet' the ball wound up in the hands of 'Tich' who missed narrowly. From the resulting kick-in a big tackle by 'Sweetie' McLaren saw the ball wind up with 'Hammer' who blazed away for another behind. Shortly after another strong defensive mark by 'Fitzy' found its way to 'Tich', who passed to 'Buckets' for a handball over the top to 'Mad' Max for a... desperate defender's touch on the goal line and another behind. It was breathtaking end-to-end stuff, but it wasn't a match-winning lead by any means. The Bullants couldn't clear their defensive line as the now-familiar Panthers Wall was erected, and following some strong tackles by 'Knuckles' Ridd, 'Biff' Tanner, 'Crash' and

'Macca' the ball wound up with our very own dead-eye in 'Mad' Max who snaffled our 2nd goal. With the quarter nearly done some strong tackling on the wing by 'Chuckles' Watt and 'Chooka' stalled another Preston push. 'Tich' got the clearance, and with a big shepherd from 'Rock' he was able to get the ball into the hands of 'Jet', who snapped truly, only for it to be marked on the goal line and the siren went. At the final break we held a good lead, knowing that we were finishing with the wind at our backs. Scores: 2.6 (18) to 1.3 (9)

In the last quarter we asked the Bullants a big question, and they had no answers. With the Panthers Wall holding Preston inside their defensive half 'Biff', 'Curly' and 'Rock' got busy, putting some big boys on their backsides with strong tackles and bumps. 'Buckets' made the forward line his own, with another strong mark, a controversial goal that was reversed when the field umpire adjudicated it was touched, and then the match-winning goal when he snapped truly from the ruck contest after the Bullants' Full-back stepped over the line when kicking in. 'Hammer' staked his claim for a new nickname ('Buddy'!) by storming into the forward line countless times, only to kick (what must be a record) 5 points for the quarter, then finally snag a goal from an impossible angle off the outside of his boot to seal our victory.

The Supercoach's award went to Joe 'Tich' Tutty for a tireless four-quarter effort of hard running & classy finishing. Well done 'Tich'!

Key learnings from this game:

- Our coaches and players are starting to figure out which positions we're well suited to, and we look better for it.
- Our quick ball movement, especially the use of handball when we're running, is going to be very hard for anyone to stop.
- Desperate efforts and fierce tackling is quickly becoming our hallmark.

Another super win! Well done to all the players. Bring on the next victims.