**PORT CLUB NOTES – 29 July 2017**

**PORT BATTLE GAMELY AGAINST LADDER LEADERS, NEW NORFOLK**

Last Saturday the Cygnet ‘Community Bank’ Football Club were at home to the undefeated New Norfolk Eagles, in what was the Port’s last home game for the regular season. If the Port Seniors can have wins in their remaining two matches against Hobart and Sorell they could secure a home final.

***Southern Storm Colts***

New Norfolk Colts got off to a fast start, with the Storm having difficulty containing the Eagles’ fast ball movement and with a six goal quarter to the visitors, they led by 26 points at quarter time. The Storm got off to a better start in the second quarter kicking the first two goals but the Eagles responded with four goals of their own to extend the margin to six goals at the long break.

The game tightened up in the third quarter with only the three goals scored, two to New Norfolk and one to the Storm. The bigger-bodied Eagles again exerted their ascendancy in the final quarter, kicking four goals to two to run out comfortable winners by 60 points and consolidate second place on the ladder. The Storm now look resigned to finishing in third place, but face another big challenge this week against the undefeated Hobart Colts.

Peter O’Neill continued his fine season, Kyle Russell was again prominent and strong off half-back, Jack Brereton acquitted himself very well in the ruck contests, with Jake Munnings, Jacob Hayers and Hallam Blacklow others to put in good efforts all day.

Jake Dance booted another three goals to take his season tally to 36 goals (from 13 games), Sean Burgess kicked two goals with Scott Blacklow and Liam O’Neill each kicking a goal.

***PORT Reserves***

With several player changes from the previous week due to injuries in the Senior team and player unavailability, the Port Reserves side faced the daunting task against an undefeated New Norfolk side. The game started similarly to the Colts game, with the Eagles quickly out of the blocks and hitting the scoreboard with relative ease, kicking eight goals to nil for the quarter and the game was effectively over.

However, after some encouraging words from Coaches Matt and Ollie, the Port lifted their work rate in the second quarter, outscoring the Eagles three goals to two. The third quarter was a repeat of the first, with the Eagles kicking another four goals while their tight defence again held the Port scoreless. The Port managed three goals in the final quarter, but with the Eagles responding with five goals of their own, the final margin was 86 points in New Norfolk’s favour.

Better players for the Port were Lucas Pel and James Booth, with two goals each, Adam Direen, Matt Coulson, Julian Parker and Chase Connlley. Tyler Cowen and Matt Coulson were the other goal scorers.

***PORT Seniors***

With several important players missing due to injury, including Josh Halton, Andrew Palmer, Brayden Hayes and Ollie Burke, the Port welcomed back Ben Halton to the line-up. Their New Norfolk opponents fielded an almost full-strength team which included Jason Laycock and Gavin Quirk, who both had played for the Port last season.

The Port were keen to take the contest up to their fancied opponents, and were quickly on the move with Gerard Brereton winning the ruck contests and Sam Dean and Jackson Gordon were instrumental in moving the ball forward where Ben Halton and Will Ford were proving a headache for the Eagle’s defence. The Port kicked the first three goals of the game before the Eagles kicked their first goal and the Port’s pressure was not letting the Eagles get their running game going. With Halton and Ford kicking four goals and two goals respectively for the quarter, the Port held a 15 point lead at quarter time.

The Port’s pressure continued in the second term, but with a few goals late in the quarter, the Eagles steadied and took a seven point lead into the long break. With Coach Ben Cato demanding his players maintain the pressure and quick ball movement, the Port continued to take the game right up to the Eagles, who were starting to get their running, loose man game style going and with a seven goals to one third quarter showed why they are undefeated and sitting on top of the ladder. Despite being almost seven goals down at three quarter time, the Port continued to battle the game right out, going down by a final margin of 57 points.

While the Port was not able to get the victory, there were certainly good signs that by applying intense pressure the Port could match it with any team, but it must be for the full four quarters.

Sam Dean continued his rich vein of form, winning many hard ball contests, and must be an early favourite for Club Best and Fairest honours. Others to put in solid four quarter performances were Aaron Dance, Nathan Duggan, Jackson Gordon, Joe Direen and Will Ford. Major goal kickers were Ben Halton (4), Will Ford (2) and Joe Direen (2).

***This week’s games***

This Saturday the Port and Storm Men’s teams travel to the TCA Ground to take on the Hobart Tigers. While on Sunday (6th August) the Port Women travel to Pembroke Park, Sorell to take on the top team, South East Suns, with the game commencing at 1.15pm, after the Port Under 17 Womens’ game.

Next weekend, the Port Women play Claremont on Friday night (11th Aug) at Abbotsfield Park, while the Port and Storm Men’s teams will have the Bye.

***Deepest Condolences***

All involved with the Cygnet Football Club were saddened to hear of the sudden passing of much respected past Treasurer and Committeeman, Les Slater, last week. The Club expresses its deepest sympathies to wife Debbie, sons Matt and Simon and daughter Lauren and the Slater family at this sad time. RIP Les.