**PORT’S PRE-SEASON WELL UNDERWAY**

The Port’s men and women have resumed training after their Christmas break and are keen to make a good start to season 2018. The Port Seniors have a tough task in Round 1, taking on Claremont at the Port on Good Friday (March 30), in a replay of last year’s Semi-Final. The Port Women will also play that day and will be keen to get their first game and win under their belt.

Reappointed Senior Coach Ben Cato said “This season we'll look to continue on from some encouraging signs in 2017. We've managed to maintain the majority of our senior side which will be complemented by a number of our underages coming through, along with a few of our former players coming back on board along and a couple of fresh faces.” He believed that the Club’s biggest improvement will come from the talented juniors coming through from last year’s runners-up Southern Storm Colts side. He said “I think you'll see four or five of the Storm boys become permanent members of the senior side, with others also getting a taste of senior footy in 2018.”

The Club has lost 2016 Best & Fairest winner, Brayden Hayes, who has returned to the North-West Coast and another loss will be big ruckman Gerard Brereton, who suffered a serious ACL knee injury in last season’s Elimination Final win over Dodges Ferry.

On a positive note, the Club is excited to welcome back Toby Cowen after a season with the Kingborough Tigers where he acquitted himself extremely well, making his Statewide League Senior debut. Toby also represented the Tassie Mariners in 2017. Toby’s pace, ball getting abilities and skills around goal will be a great boost for the Port.

The Club has also reappointed Matthew Whitehouse and Ollie Burke as Reserves Coaches while Daniel ‘Fred’ Webster and Paddy O’Neill will share the Southern Storm Colt’s coaching duties.

The Port Women enter their second SFLW season with new coach, Renee Schuettpelz, who has taken over the reins from inaugural coach, Tricia Phillips. Renee played with the Port last season having previously played with the Kingborough Tigers and other clubs, and brings a lot of knowledge and vision for 2018. Renee also represented Tassie in the AFL Women’s Masters in Geelong last October. Renee said “Our aim for season 2018 is to build on what was started last year, to better our skills, better our fitness and be a more competitive team and to get deeper into the finals.”

The women are currently training twice a week, with skills and fitness improving with every session. Most of the 2017 team will again pull on the boots, with several new and first-time players, including Michelle Cowan and Tameeka Coventry, joining the Club, along with a number of skilful young women coming up from the Southern Storm Under 17s. The Club has retained the services of Keren Scotney, one of the best and longest playing full backs in the state. Keren has played Statewide level football and has represented Tasmania at various women’s carnivals around Australia. She will play her 100th game early in the season, which is a massive achievement in women’s football. The Club is still on the hunt for new players. No experience is necessary, all you need is a positive attitude!!

The Port have lost last year’s Captain and Club Best & Fairest winner, Caitlyn Phillips, and vice-Captain Kara Geeves who have moved to other clubs in what will be an expanded SFL Women’s competition this season, with several new Clubs expected to join.

Off the field there have been several changes on the Club’s Executive. David O’Neill will continue as President, with Trent Cowen and Dave ‘Pip’ Townsend moving into the Vice-President’s positions, Kerrie-Lyn O’Neill taking on the Secretary role and Jason Doyle will take over from Trent as Club Treasurer.

The Club wishes to thank wife and husband team, Tracey Marriott-Brereton and Matt Brereton, who have both stepped back from senior club duties to assist with the Southern Storm junior Club, where they have two sons playing. Tracey has been an excellent Club Secretary for the past two years and husband, Matt Brereton, has coached the Southern Storm Colts to Preliminary and Grand Finals in the past two seasons since the Colts team was reformed after not fielding a side due to a lack of player numbers in 2015. Both will be severely missed from their senior Club roles, but no doubt will continue to play a significant role in developing the Club’s up and coming young footballers.

All intending men and women players are encouraged to get along to training on Monday nights at Cygnet or at Snug Park on Wednesday nights, as the season is only 7 weeks away!