**TEN GOAL LAST QUARTER GETS THE PORT HOME**

After the early morning fog lifted it was a perfect, sunny day for football at Kermandie last Saturday. The ground was in magnificent condition for the Port Women’s game against University followed by the Cygnet Reserves and Seniors playing host to Dodges Ferry.

PORT WOMEN

The Port were missing several key players including Captain Michelle Cowen, April Pottinger and Full Back Keren Scotney for their clash with University, with both teams keen to get their first win of the season. It was an even first quarter with both defences on top and making scoring difficult for their opponents. Mattia Duggan, who rucked in the absence of Michelle and April, stood up to the challenge and kicked the Port’s solitary goal in the first quarter. This was matched by University and the scores were locked at 6 points apiece at quarter time. The second quarter saw University have four scoring shots to the Port’s one, but neither side was able to score a goal and University took a narrow 3 point lead into the half-time break.

It was a tight struggle in the third quarter as both teams were giving it their all. Jess Burnett kicked her first goal in senior football and the Port added four behinds but University countered with a goal of their own and the Port led by one solitary point going into the last quarter.

Unfortunately for the Port, University scored the only goal of the final term and were able to record their first win in the SFLW’s competition, with the final margin being 9 points.

Better players on the day were Anna Bellette-Stanway, debutante Jaimie Noye who worked very hard in the backline, Annaliese Dance, Hayley Flakemore, Chantelle Clark and Emily Direen.

Many thanks to Kermandie Hire who sponsored awards for the best players in all three games on Saturday. Your support is most appreciated.

This Sunday there will be another Gala Day with all matches played at Lauderdale Oval. The Port Women will line up against the Hobart Tigers, with the game to commence at 12 noon.

RESERVES

The Cygnet Reserves were also looking for their first win of the season and keen to give a good account of themselves against Dodges Ferry. Like the earlier Women’s game, it was a tight contest in the first quarter with scoring opportunities limited. Despite the ideal playing conditions, each team was only able to score one goal in the first quarter, and it was the Port up by two points at the first break. It was more of the same in the second quarter with the Port kicking the only goal of the quarter and keeping the Dodges’ Sharks to two behinds and the margin was one goal in Cygnet’s favour at half-time.

The Sharks started to get on top in the third quarter with their running game, kicking three goals to the Port’s one goal and Dodges now led by 7 points at three quarter time. It was a familiar story in the final quarter, with many of the Port players ‘running out of legs’, which allowed Dodges to continually move the ball forward where the Port backline was under constant pressure. A four goal quarter by the Sharks, while holding the Port goal less, and the visitors recorded a comfortable 31 point win.

Brad Sculthorpe, Darcy Millhouse and Elliott Ross were strong contributors all day and they were well supported by Jack Bester, Kyle Russell and Paddy O’Neill who never gave up trying. Chris Stockfeld finished with two goals and along with Shane Clark were the Port’s only goal scorers in a game that the Port had every opportunity to win but a lack of fitness told the story in the end.

SENIORS

Fifth spot was up for grabs as Dodges Ferry, kicking with the wind to the Port Huon end, started quickly and were winning the centre clearances and doing all the attacking. The Port lost Jake Dance through a shoulder injury in the first contest of the game which immediately had first-gamer Josh Coad on the field. Fortunately for the Port, the Shark’s inaccuracy with four goals from nine scoring shots was keeping the Port in the game and with Cygnet managing two goals of their own from limited forward entries, the Sharks had moved to a 15 point lead at quarter time. Andrew Palmer and Rhys Jennings were leading from the front with their ferocious attack on the ball, while George O’Neill, Toby Cowen and Joe Direen were getting plenty of the ball and keeping the Port in the game.

Despite having the breeze in the second quarter the Port were having trouble converting and failed to kick a goal while Dodges kicked one at the other end and had extended their lead at half-time to 21 points. The Port backline were under constant pressure but were able to stay strong and repel many of the Shark’s forward forays. It was clear that the Port needed to lift their intensity and Coach Ben Cato demanded a much bigger commitment and contribution from his players in the second half.

Dodges started the third quarter well and it looked like they might run away with the game, but to their credit the Port took the challenge up to their opponents and with the move of Will Ford to the forward line, scoring was even for the term with both teams kicking four goals, and the Sharks lead was down to three goals with a quarter to play.

The move of young gun Elijah Reardon onto the ball paid immediate dividends, as Cygnet got the centre clearance and immediately kicked the first goal of the final term followed quickly by a second and with the lead now only one goal it was game on. The Port now had a ‘smell of victory’ and with the young Port brigade gaining confidence, the free flowing run of the Port midfield began to shine. The midfield pressure from the Port lifted as they tackled, smothered and did all the little things that had been lacking in the first three quarters. Elijah was brilliant, leaping high, sprinting away from opponents, winning numerous possessions and kicking goals and he was well supported by Toby Cowen who continued to provide plenty of run and flair in the midfield, also breaking the lines and delivering plenty of football to the Port forwards, while also managing to score a couple of goals himself.

The other move which proved to be a game changer was that of Will Ford from the back line to the forward line, where he piled on 5 goals in the second half. In the end it was a magnificent 10 goal quarter for the Port and with Dodges tiring, the final quarter resulted in a 56 point turnaround and the Port ‘escaping’ with an unlikely 38 point victory.

Andrew Palmer, Toby Cowen (2 goals), Will Ford, Jackson Gordon, Marcus Coulson and Joe Direen were strong contributors all game while others to hit the scoreboard were Elijah Reardon (2 goals), Rhys Jennings, Jason Shaw, Andrew Palmer, Joe Direen, Marcus Coulson, Ben Halton and Ben Cato.

The Port and Southern Storm Men’s teams have the bye this weekend and a chance to rest up and recover from any soreness and niggling injuries. Their next games will be at Cygnet on Saturday 12th May when the Seniors and Reserves will host Brighton while the Storm Colts will be up against Claremont (also at Cygnet).

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS

A big thank you to all our volunteers who so freely give up their time to help our Club run from week to week. Volunteers are the life-blood of any community sporting club and The Port is no different. Without your fantastic support, enthusiasm and commitment the Port would simply not be able to operate.

However, the Club is always on the lookout for more helpers around the Club, whether it be helping with the weekly players’ teas, in the canteen or a more official role on game days. If you are interested in getting involved please make yourself known to one of our hard-working Committee members.