**MUST WIN GAME FOR THE PORT THIS WEEK**

It was a tough day at the office last Saturday with all three Cygnet teams suffering defeat at the hands of Lindisfarne at Anzac Park. The Senior loss now has them out of the top 5, with one roster match remaining. However, a Port win over New Norfolk this weekend and a Lindisfarne win over Hobart will mean it will come down to percentage to determine who will finish in fifth spot.

Despite their loss last Saturday, the Southern Storm Colts are safely ensconced in the top five and have the chance to go one step further this year and take out the Colt’s Premiership. Unfortunately the Cygnet Reserves and Port Women have missed the finals and this coming weekend’s games will be their last for season 2018.

COLTS

The second-placed Southern Storm Colts were up against third-placed Lindisfarne, in what is likely to be a preview of the Qualifying Final match-up in the first week of the finals. The Lindisfarne Two Blues opened the game strongly and had much of the play, but for their inaccuracy (three goals from nine scoring shots), the margin at quarter time could have been much greater than 15 points. It was a much better second quarter for the Storm, who kicked three goals to their opponent’s two goals and Lindisfarne lead was only 8 points at half-time.

The home team burst from the half-time break and were moving the ball quickly and putting the Storm on-ballers and defence under constant pressure. Lindisfarne kicked three goals for the term, while at the other end, the Storm looked flat and were struggling to get any score on the board, managing one behind only. At the final break, Lindisfarne had extended the margin to 29 points, and while the final quarter was a more even contest with both teams scoring three goals, the final margin was 30 points in Lindisfarne’s favour.

Better players for the Storm were Lukas Ford (2 goals), Jacob Burnett, Murray Bastick, Brayden Dowling, Josh Coad and James Zeitzen. Jordan Lane kicked 2 goals, while Nathan Duggan, Murray Bastick and Connor Soward were the other goal kickers.

This Saturday the Storm will be up against ladder-leaders New Norfolk, in what will be a tough hit-out in the lead up to the final series.

RESERVES

If playing the undefeated top team wasn’t enough, the Cygnet Reserves were short on numbers and called upon past players Paul Cowen and Jules Direen to help make up numbers. The first quarter saw the Port take the contest right up to their opponents, restricting Lindisfarne to three goals while kicking one goal themselves and the Two Blues led by 19 points a quarter time.

The flood gates really opened up for Lindisfarne in the second quarter, piling on six goals while keeping the Port scoreless. Unfortunately for the Port, despite their best efforts, it was more of the same in the second half. Lindisfarne, showing their class and superior fitness, went on to score nine goals to the Port’s three goals for the half, to run out comfortable winners by 105 points.

Peter O’Neill put in a strong performance and others to do well included Jack Bester (2 goals), Tom Slevin, Jules Direen, Joel Davey and Matthew Coulson (1 goal). Marcus Coulson, playing his 50th Club game, kicked the Port’s only other goal.

SENIORS

Kicking with a slight breeze to the river end, the Port got off to a promising start and soon had the first goal of the game. It wasn’t long before Lindisfarne started getting their running game going and were giving their forwards numerous one-out opportunities. Cygnet won the early part of the quarter and Lindisfarne the latter, and with both sides having seven scoring shots for the quarter. But the home side’s greater accuracy with six goals to the Port’s four goals had the Two Blues up by 10 points at the first break.

Jack Brereton was dominant in the ruck early, combining with Rhys Jennings and Toby Cowen for a number of centre clearances and forward thrusts, but the Lindisfarne on-ballers were also roving to Jack’s ruck work. While the Port dominated the centre clearances in the second quarter, Lindisfarne won the inside 50’s and also on the scoreboard. The Port backs were working tirelessly to stop the flow, particularly Jackson Gordon, Campbell Gane and Cam Wilcox, who had the huge job on Lindisfarne’s key forward Cassidy. Five goals to Lindisfarne in the second quarter against the Port’s solitary goal saw Lindisfarne take a handy 34 point lead into the half time break.

The third quarter belonged to the Port, who were winning both the centre clearances and the inside 50’s, but delivery into their forward line was again not great. The Port were wasteful in front of goal scoring 5 behinds for the quarter, a result of some serious pressure from the Lindisfarne backs. Both teams scored three goals for the quarter and the margin was now 30 points at three quarter time.

The final quarter saw the Port win the centre clearances and the inside 50’s but were not able to convert on the scoreboard. Once again the Port were wasteful in front of goal, kicking one goal five behinds for the quarter. Despite the Port having more scoring shots for the game, and outscoring Lindisfarne in the second half, the Two Blue’s superior accuracy gave them victory by 29 points.

The Port were certainly not disgraced in what had been a high intensity game with pressure around the ball a feature. In the end it was probably Lindisfarne’s greater ‘polish’ and clinical finishing that got them the victory.

Jack Brereton has hit some great form beating one of the premier ruckmen in the competition and giving the Port midfield brigade first use of the ball, with Toby Cowen and George O’Neill making the most of this and providing plenty of forward thrusts. Down back the defensive line of Wilcox, Gane and Gordon worked tirelessly to keep the Port in the game.

The Port had eight goal scorers with Jake Dance kicking two goals, and single goals to Cowen, Elijah Reardon, Ben Halton, Ollie Burke, Joe Direen, Will Ford and Ben Cato.

THIS WEEK’S GAMES

On Saturday the Port will host the New Norfolk Eagles in the final home and away roster matches for the season. A win for the Cygnet Seniors is a must if they wish to keep their final’s hopes alive. The Port will also hold its Annual Past Players and Supporters function on Saturday, with formalities commencing at 11am. Tickets are still available from the Club.

The Port Women travel to Anzac Park, Lindisfarne on Sunday to take on New Norfolk, with the strong chance to record their fourth win of the season. Their game starts at 11.40am.