

## R2 - Green Shoots Of Recovery

Contributed by The Jester

Yes, we lost again. It certainly felt like 2007 once more, especially with all of the ill-informed whingeing that occurs around me in Block 313 whenever Freo do not resemble a smoothly purring Rolls Royce.

As has become alarmingly usual, the Dockers were competitive for much of the game against a determined Hawks outfit - only to be smashed during the second quarter and the first 10 minutes of the last. Although the midfield had a welcome oil change during the week and stopped creaking, the team's decision making is the most ponderous I have seen in many years. However, a couple of Daniel Gilmore's efforts last night should demonstrate to the people around me that total instinctive play can be just as damaging!

And yet - the team is gradually starting to find its way. That third quarter fightback was stirring stuff, got the Purple Army excited for the first time this year and proved that success is not far away. But like an ocean liner trying to navigate around an iceberg, it's taking time to swing the team away from a "top-up" policy which has clearly not worked towards a more balanced outfit, and only time will tell if we are to avoid striking.

The introduction of more youth, so much ballyhooed during the week, worked very well given that a certain lack of experience was always to be expected. Rhys Palmer is yet another fine product of the Shark hatchery who gives the team something fresh. Chris Mayne does the No. 23 guernsey proud in a totally different way to his glorious predecessor, but looks a likely forward to develop over the next couple of years. And while Garrick Ibbotson was less impressive, he copped a string of very dodgy umpiring decisions and applied himself all evening.

The defence had a bit of a torrid night, with Hawthorn spreading the load evenly meaning that there were no clear winners. Des Headland still works harder than any of the other midfielders with the exception of bursts of quality from Peter Bell. And Pav looked more settled in the centre than against the Pies - if he is going to spend more time there, at least he's getting his eye back in.

One thing that did worry me was a lack of trust in a forward line minus Pavlich a lot of the time. McPharlin forward is a strategy that works during games, but as the early part of 2006 proved, once it becomes semi-permanent his impact there is lessened. On a number of occasions Mayne was in best position, but totally ignored by his teammates. And while the late inclusion of Adam Campbell was a sound decision, he also seemed to be left in the cold - he adds so much presence to our forward 50, but is rarely backed to have set shots or indeed take a contested mark. Given that Tarrant is woefully off the boil at the moment, and Peake and Crowley are battling, I say leave these two there to develop a new chemistry with their colleagues that could catch opponents off guard.

So in all in all, I left Subiaco last night in a more positive frame of mind that I did the MCG last week. I can see green shoots of recovery in my beloved FFC, enough to believe that 2008 could still be a vintage year. But we must win against The Enemy next week - our failure to do so in the corresponding fixture last year was a major bungle that helped unravel our season. If we can, confidence will blossom in the new/old Dockers - and we'll be off.