

## Round 4 - Sleeping Sickness

Contributed by The Jester

And no, I am not referring to my fervent wish that I could somehow wake up from this horrible dream and find it's Sunday morning again.

I had a feeling in my water the entire week that Richmond would come out swinging in their match against Fremantle. As I mentioned at the end of last week's blog, we never beat them easily and on a number of occasions have had to fight back from early deficits to overcome the Tigers. For a brief period in the second quarter yesterday, it seemed I was right again - but alas, it was not to be.

The entire team seemed asleep at the switch almost from the word go. Despite all the statements made during the week, Fremantle looked every inch a team that believed the publicity and simply expected to win. There was simply no excuse whatsoever for the shocking lack of speed, tackling pressure, spirit or centre clearance game plan exhibited yesterday. Of course, there's even less excuse for the torrent of bandwaggoners making for exit about halfway through the final quarter, either.

The game wasn't without some highlights, few though they were. Chris Mayne has obviously inherited more than Shaun McManus' curly blond hair and Shane Parker's jumper - given his unceasing efforts to try and win the ball where everyone else stood there and watched Richmond players run past, he also clearly "gets it" - the essence of being a Fremantle Docker - in a way that few of his comrades do. Well, Steven Dodd aside...although well down on his early season form, our favourite Ferndale bogan still had a few moments of purple heart to the extent that I'm amazed people are slating him above several others.

Rhys Palmer finally had a poor game, although being caught for holding the ball three times wasn't necessarily his fault alone. Chris Tarrant actually played better, though still well short of the lofty expectations we place on him. Supermac can effortlessly do it at both ends (but sadly only one at a time). But aside from that, it was a game best consigned to the dustbin of history.

With one important point. Now is the time for Fremantle to become Mark Harvey's team. I thought it would at a couple of points before now, but in reality it's merely Chris Connolly's Mark II lineup, lacking a real sense of direction or new style. The coach can only work with what he has, and I will admit he has been trying a few new things out - though unfortunately to the team's detriment in 2008 so far. But the time has come for him to totally dismantle the existing setup and press on with something different. Something his.

It's not really too late. Although the percentage took a battering, if there had to be a nadir equivalent to the Geelong match of 2006, at least it's come early. And this week Harves returns to the scene of his first win as coach, another situation where Freo had been completely written off and produced a stirring victory. I am heading to the city of churches with the belief that it's this particular playing group's last chance to perform - otherwise, we might as well fall off the precipice and look forward to a new era of our own.

But to all those people who have diminished my football experience over the last 18 months and are no doubt bound to start up again - whatever happens, it's FFC for me, forever and always.