

Well that was...unexpected.

Contributed by Roger

Having read many of the angry and disappointed posts on here, well, that wasn't.

That was the worst I remember Freo playing since Drum. We might have played a similar game under CC at one time, but I don't remember it (well, there was that 100 point drubbing at home against North, but I've already said, I don't remember it). If we did, it was probably against a team we weren't expected to win against so surely. I understand and agree with many of the sentiments posted, but unempirical conspiracy theories and throwing out every player who notched up over 50 games doesn't cut it for me.

When you see a team play like that, you know coaches and umpires are not the problem. Yes, Harvey is reasonably new to the caper, but he's been around Freo long enough to be known, and know where things are at.

But the umps can't go without a mention. Number 31 was one of the two rookies that absolutely belted seven shades of living suitcase out of us: Letting Richmond play-on advantage and calling all ours back; giving frees to them when they were clearly ours; not paying tackles; not paying holding the ball; not paying obvious 50s like holding up play and pushing after a mark (I know, they're soft too, but that the way the game's umped); giving a super-soft free to Pav, when there was nothing there. Centre bounce frees for god knows what. We all know Jeff would need to have an arm ripped off to get a free, so they were at least consistent there. In short, they got just about everything wrong in a game of footy that was possible, and set new records for unempirical ineptitude. After losses like that I know we can be biased, as some blokes get so frustrated they can give away stupid frees everywhere. But I saw none of that. I saw the wooden spoon of umpiring trio's.

I understand how that feeds the conspiracy theories, but we wouldn't have won that game anyway. It would have been closer though. Our blokes turned up and had already pocketed the points without expecting to do anything for them. When Richmond made it clear they'd come to have a dig, and then the umps kicked in, heads dropped. I saw blokes not running in to tackle after play on called, and letting Richmond fun free with masses of room; no chasing, no manning up. No ability to win a hard ball; no structure; no teamwork; no skills. No heart.

These are all things that go wrong when you give up and just want to be elsewhere. This is what hurts the most. Richmond, give them credit; they played well all over the ground. Their back line was ordinary, but they didn't need one, we were so bad. Richmond go ok, but wilt badly under pressure. We didn't put any on.

I also don't advocate changing 6,7,8 players after losses like this, and looking for young blokes that aren't ready, to somehow step in and automatically step up-that's the simple, unworkable answer to a complex problem. Who do you drop when the whole team falls apart? Even Belly's disposal fell away badly. Palmer and Mayne were very handy last week and atrocious this week, which is very easy to do when surrounded by atrocity, and having had the sort of media week that made the opposition sit up and take careful note.

We recruited blokes like Solly, Taz and Johnson to add to some grunt and this was supposed to be a year to have a dig at getting deep into finals. This isn't the time to chuck in extra WAFL performers (and few of them are performing anyway) just because we're pissed off. The people that talk about rebuilding don't understand that's just what we've been doing the last 4 years. That's why we drafted experienced players last year-we were considered ready to have a go.

Harvey said it all for me when he talked about the team expecting external pressures to provide motivation.

For me, this is typified by DJ. I'm not singling him out, because there's already more juries out on him than Lindy Chamberlain and OJ Simpson combined, but the last time he got fired up and angry and played an absolute belter, was the week after the Selwood case-a week where few would have criticised him if he'd had a shocker.

External pressures. This is what Harvey is talking about. Too many blokes either as individuals, or as part of the team psyche, only fire up when they think there is something to get fired up for. Like derbies. External pressures. And if we're honest, last week we played an ordinary game and won, whereas our other two losses we kept trying, fighting hard, and came up only a few kicks from beating two teams that will be playing finals. And we did that playing very ordinary football as well. We can do better. We've seen what this team can do when they play with the sort of confidence Richmond displayed yesterday. The last time we played to potential was the nine game streak of 06. Kick-started after some equally woeful efforts. Most of the blokes that played then are still with us.

It starts and ends with the group we have. Yes, we overrate our list, but that is the bias of the supporter. Playing well, we

can challenge the best teams in this comp. Playing well, Richmond would have been solidly beaten, after having had a good dig.

Too much is made of coaches and strategy as well these days, poncy rules changes aside, this is the same, basic game it always was-want the ball, want to win, and look like that's what you want. Nothings changed, though. The coach is the first scapegoat when a team's on its arse. Connolly did a good job strategically on and off the field, but he couldn't fix the thing that kept going wrong. The measure of Harvey won't be in his ability to read play, set positional changes and fancy rotations. His success will rely on getting inside the players heads and forming a team that can consistently perform to their ability. I really believe that is, and always has been, Freo's problem. Along with a slow midfield, which somehow manages to overcome that when they're playing for each other.

Sometimes losses like this are needed. Because they show the team what is wrong with them.

It lifts the lid on the average performances, and shows them how close any team is to being totally crap if the attitude of every single player is not right; that the difference between winning and losing is as much about how much you want it and believe you can do it, and want to do it with the bloke next to you-as it is about your ability to get it done. How capable, only they will know, if they have the internal motivation to find out.