

2008 Round 11 - Seniors vs Old Melburnians

Last Updated Wednesday, 18 June 2008

Score: 2 - 1

Goals: Johnson, Burris

Match report by Joaquin Rodriguez San Pedro

The weekend crept in with the difficult prospect of facing Old Melbournians, a team placed near the top of the ladder. We had experienced two defeats in the previous weeks. The first one against Ashburton in a match that left several of our key players injured including our talented playmaker Julio Serrano. The second one against Fitzroy City in a game that we lost in the second half after poor defending from set pieces.

It was a clear day with only a few scattered clouds marring the pearly blue sky. It was precisely one of those days when your soul beckons you to start running around like an idiot chasing an inflated pig's bladder. Of course, nowadays they call them footballs.

From the vantage point of the barbecue - that I was proudly making in honour to the Argentine blood running through my veins - conveniently located about 100 yards from the ground, I could vaguely follow the reserves game. I regret to say that I didn't see Monash cruise to a 4 - 1 victory but word of mouth came to me - in the form of high praise, of course - of a penalty scored by Ariel and a beautiful goal scored by Robbie when he lobbed the keeper.

As for the seniors game, the appearance of the referee and an importunate comment by Tony shrouded the game with an air of suspicion. Just before the kick off, the ref let Tony know that his low voice carried a long distance, a remark that didn't bode well for us considering the words he had uttered.

Finally the game started with

Monash putting all the pressure in the first 20 minutes. It seems we have finally laid to rest the phantoms of previous games when we used to enter the pitch like a virgin into a brothel: hard but hazy. This time we were focused and determined. In the space of a few minutes we had taken control of the game and we almost generated a few chances.

Around the 20th minute, calamity stroke. Our otherwise reliable goalkeeper, Jarred, decided to do a "Cech" (or should it be called a "Schwarzer"?). A free kick from about 30 or 40 yards out floated into the box and beyond the grasping hands of our keeper - probably blinded by sunlight or some evil spirit - to finally rest limply in the back of the net. Once again we decided to make the game a bit more challenging for us and give Harry an ulcer in the process.

The goal didn't change the flow of the game. We continued to attack, if only putting a bit more grit and anger in our tackles - Nick Malios and Chris excelling at this art. Maybe we've reached a point in our minds when conceding feels just like paying taxes: it sucks but there's no way around it. In any case, we kept trying to play our game as if nothing had happened.

A ball played down the right wing provided Greg with enough time to feed me a perfect ball down the line. I chased after the rounded lady with a mad desire and crossed the ball to the middle. Whether it took a deflection or not it's of no importance since Liam brilliantly stroke the ball in the air from the edge of the box to place it past the despairing, outstretched hands of the keeper.

We were back on level terms and we were playing better but halftime came and with it our most maligned curse. They call it a game of two halves and it is so for a reason: football clichés perfunctory obey the laws of decades of accumulated wisdom. No matter what Harry, Rik or we tell ourselves during half-time; no matter what goes on through our heads and hearts; if we are winning (or drawing) the game, we'll go out on the pitch like a flaccid willie: all willing but impotent.

So on we went, with all the desire to put the cat in the bag but, for reasons unbeknownst to the mere mortals that Saturday after Saturday trudge aimlessly on the pitch, without the capacity of taking control of the game. It was my pretense to try to get hold of the ball and play it on the ground but the siege was swiftly laid on our goal and my dreams were swiftly shattered. I swear that at times it almost felt like being a messenger during the First World War. I was running from one trench to the other watching the bombs fly over my head - admittedly in this case it was an elusive

sphere and the feeling was quite the opposite. However, in the end the question remained the same: is it ever going to land on me?

It must be said that despite estranging ourselves from the ball, our defensive duties were impeccable and the whole team must be praised for how hard we fought for every ball. Words of praise must also be reserved for our back three, Tomo, Luke and Tim, who did a very professional job fending off every attack. Jarred must also be praised for taking command under the goalposts and shouting orders like a drunken sergeant.

On the attacking third of the field, an almost virgin territory by now, we somehow found that the ball had ended down the right wing (maybe it was even me who sent it there, who knows). Richard crossed the ball and I ran after it if only to remember its shape, to acquaint myself with its mysteries. Luckily enough, we got a corner so I lovingly cuddled it to the corner flag in those very few precious seconds.

I curled the ball in hoping for Tim's head to tower over a sea of red shirts but it wasn't to be. I saw the ball cleared just outside of the box where a long-toothed Nick Burriss was hungrily waiting for it. Once again I found myself on the line of goal (if only close to the corner flag) watching the ball tracing the most impossible trajectory, dodging and eluding about 20 angry feet trying to desperately kick it into the goal or out of the box. As it should be, the ball had only one destination in mind: to rest in the back of the net.

Merriment and revelry broke out as we all run to huddle around Nicky, who was almost as surprised as we were to see the ball finding its narrow way between so many legs. Funnily enough, the last minutes were not very tense. The only moment of worry was during a free kick when they managed to get a header that looked dangerous. However, Jarred made amends for his previous mistake by stretching out a saving hand and pushing the ball away from its path.

After about 12 minutes of added time, the referee finally blew the whistle to give Monash a hard fought and well earned victory. We needed the points and we got them, will we repeat the feat against Noble Park this weekend?