

CGFC Newsletter #8

Well, the season has ended and not as we would have liked. I think we would have been entitled to believe that promotion to B Section was a distinct possibility coming into the finals series, three games clear on top. Even the draw with Bulleen Templestowe in round 18 was not of great concern; rather, we regarded it as a 'wake-up' call on the eve of the second semi-final. The second semi against MHSOB was a disappointment; they jumped us and we struggled to get back into the game. Melbourne's last 4 goals late in the final quarter actually made the scoreboard look pretty ordinary but our turn over of the ball was just so costly. We felt at the time that we had learnt a lot and wanted another crack at them.

The preliminary final saw us up and about in a positive frame of mind but again our skill level was not as it should have been and we 'murdered' the ball too often in the first half and consequently had to play catch up footy for the rest of the day. There was some inspirational play by our boys in the second half; Tom Sundberg and Andrew Slevison in particular were outstanding. Try as we might, and despite matching Oakleigh on the score board briefly, things did not go our way and most supporters at the ground would agree. Oakleigh's kicking for goal was unbelievable (20.6) in a pressure game. I think it is important to mention players who performed at or near their best on the day, in addition to Tom Sunny and Slevy. Sam Wood worked really hard and provided a real lift on more than one occasion with his strength and penetrating kicking. Gav Colosimo earned his promotion from the Reserves first semi-final and continued on last Saturday with a four quarter display that gave us drive and competitiveness in the centre square. Dom O'Keefe, in his first senior game, was simply fantastic in holding one of the key Oakleigh forwards all day and only had one goal scored on him really late in the game. It takes someone special to play as well as Dom did in a pressure final. Zac Parson's confirmed the selectors' faith in him throughout the season and while still eligible for U19 football, went ahead in leaps and bounds and was great in the prelim final and not fazed by the occasion. Tim Noblett had to ruck for most of the game and consistently jumped over the opposition big men. Although missing his ruck mate, Mark Nelson (injured in the second semi), Nobby ran himself into the ground. To again touch on the performance of Tom and Andrew, their efforts in the final quarter, when added to their attack on the ball all day, was simply inspiring. Darcy Daly and Simon Widjaja worked really hard and Ben Carboni and Matt Sundberg lifted their work rate when most needed. Andrew Docker did everything possible to stem the flow down back and Ben Price and Mark Liddell stood up in the second half. The others all had their moments and there were no players in the Blue and White who did not provide effort and spirit but, on the day, we were beaten by a better side that used its strength and experience to answer our every challenge. The most frustrating aspect of the two finals' losses for all of us is the knowledge that we were ready for promotion with everything to look forward to, possessed of a young, vibrant and talented squad. Our forward planning covering improved amenities, recruitment, extended membership and stronger communication and marketing will still go ahead, undaunted by another season in C Section. Steven Lawrence, shattered on Saturday along with the rest of us, is determined to take the next step in 2010 and has 12 months coaching experience behind him and importantly a far better knowledge of our skill needs and of the club's overall potential. His efforts as a first year senior coach contributed significantly to the turn around in our club's fortunes. He has taken a number of players to the next level of competency and has an exceptionally astute football brain that is destined to allow him much success in this field. He is immensely passionate about the game and has strong opinions regarding the sacrifices that everyone has to make to be ultimately successful. He is clearly the right person to take us to the next levels and will increase his coaching team's expertise in 2010. The Reserves, Under 19's and Club 18 all contributed strongly to the improvement in on-field performances throughout the season. The Club 18 coached by Shaun Frazer, in his first year, were by far the most organised and therefore supportive Club 18 since our flirtation with this section commenced. Shaun never hesitated to promote his players to the Reserves when needed, was unselfish and respectful of the club's on field needs. The Clubbies' support at Club functions was appreciated. Ben Gross, past player and first year coach, enjoyed his role with the U19's and is keen to continue in 2010. The young, average age of our anticipated senior squad in coming seasons will probably not require the U19 squad to release as many of its players to the senior side in 2010 and hopefully the U19's can again participate in finals. Ben has already started work on building his squad for next year. The Reserves showed in their excellent first semi-final performance that the youth policy is working and they will benefit from another wave of graduating U19's in 2010. James Lawson, now with two seasons under his belt as Reserves' Coach, is in his twenties and is an astute young coach who will hopefully find the time to again be involved next season. The addition of Russell Jarrett as Strength and Conditioning Coach was a considerable bonus in 2009 and he relished the responsibility of adding professionalism plus added appeal to the physical preparation of our squads. The fact that all opening sessions on training nights included agility and speed was not only a greater motivation for the playing group but contributed strongly to the exciting standard of football displayed by our teams. Russ was also Steve's runner for the greater part of the season and his organised, professional pre-season program provided motivation in the early months as evidenced by the huge numbers during pre-season. Our medical staff, lead by Laura Jennings and including Kate Ellett, Mel Medlen and Ben Shipperd have been outstanding with their commitment and they also form a valuable part of our football club community. Hary Widjaja and Chris Mathieson have also added their professional advice and support to the medical team whenever needed. Simon Kelleway was fantastic for us on match days throughout the season and generally acted as boundary umpire for our Reserves' team but also often ran water and/or the boundary for the senior team. Simon's contribution did not go unnoticed. Albert Kalaja again performed expertly as Reserves' goal umpire, a job that is always hard to fill. Albert was always accompanied by his daughter Jessica (our number one supporter at all the reserves' games). Peter May and Dale Ross were also terrific with their support as interchange steward and time keeper respectively and Mark Stewart generously supplied the coaches with scaffolding at

all home games for better viewing purposes. Steve Townsend also supported the reserves while watching brother Alex play. It would be remiss of me to not specifically mention the great work by Ross Wood throughout the season but especially for his team manager duties. Steve Lawrence's match committee was extensive and well served by excellent support from Dale Lawrence and Mark Hiscock. Mark is an extended member of the Lawrence family. Dale's football experience and Mark's excellent presentation of statistical information from each game were invaluable. Greg Meredith's contribution following completion of his School football commitments was greatly valued in the lead up to and during finals. From the very beginning of the pre-season, our School has been fantastic in their support. The outstanding facilities at Caulfield Campus were made available whenever we needed them. Our Principal and co-Patron, Stephen Newton, leads the way with his support of CGFC. His Head of Sport, Denis Meyer and Lindsay Thompson Centre Manager, Joanne Stone, made liaison with the School very pleasant indeed. School 1st XVIII Coach Greg Meredith and Director of Football, Barry Rowlings are as much a part of our Club now as anyone. Their backing during pre-season and throughout the year is especially appreciated. The professional advice and assistance we have received from our Board members, the majority of whom are parents of players, has taken us to a new level. We have been given an assurance that their support will remain as we enter the 2010 season and their ability to attract other parents and supporters to assist is proven. Not only do the Board members apply their skills at meetings but they are also very hands on at training nights and other occasions. Andrew Will continued to encourage our past players, through the Fieldsmen Group, to provide tangible support and we noted a substantial increase in home game luncheons over that of previous seasons. This was due to both past players and current parents and family members committing to these occasions. John and Sue Hammond were instrumental in the increase in attendance at luncheons. Amateur football continues to prosper but the domination of the private school 'old boy' teams plus the Melbourne University teams, in both A and B Section, is clear. It is not an easy group to infiltrate as Ormond and Old Camberwell (both relegated) and Old Carey (7th) and Hampton Rovers (8th), experienced as relative 'new chums' in B Section this season. I have no doubt that we were in a sound position to consolidate had we been promoted for 2010 but that is purely academic in the circumstances. In my opinion the two promoted teams, Oakleigh and MHSOB, will also face challenges in B Section in 2010, given the make up of their lists and the fact that neither fielded Under 19 teams this season (Oakleigh withdrew their U19's during the season). I hasten to add that both these clubs made the most of their resources and are to be congratulated on reaching the Grand Final. Who will win it? I guess we don't really care now! No club has the 'divine right' to a place in the top grades. We have as much right as anyone. We can more than match the other 'regulars' in the top sections but we simply have to do it better. Regrettably, we must wait a further season to prove we have what it takes to consolidate when our chance comes. Our current playing group will change in 2010 but will almost certainly change for the better. I am sure there will be some departures but it seems they will be well outweighed by the arrivals. Sometimes you just know when it is likely to happen and the labors of the past two seasons in relation to recruitment will become more apparent prior to the start of 2010. We still face exciting times ahead. Before we consider our list of possible recruits, I think it appropriate to list the players to have played in the senior team in 2009, some with considerable distinction, but who were not selected or were injured for the preliminary final - Jordan Stewart, Andrew Strain, Shaun Meredith, Tom Spinks, Cal Jones, Tom Breen, Chris Axias, Justin Kremmer, Dean Spanos, Mark Nelson, Fran McArdle and Alex Ford. That is over half a team and, every one of them has undoubted ability to feature next season, and, the majority could be part of the backbone of the club for the next decade. We did have the benefit of Rennie Gilchrist and Clay Johnston in our senior team for a few games during the season when they were not required by Sandringham and both slotted perfectly into our line-up. Chris Fagan, one of our better players in B Section finals in past seasons, did play his first senior game for some time in our preliminary final and may now have the opportunity to return to the required fitness levels and add his value in 2010. Ben Hyland, decorated player from 2008, has returned from overseas but we will treat him as one of the 'arrivals' for 2010. There are also regular Reserves' players young enough to make the commitment to get to the next level of participation. There is no doubt in my mind that we are very well placed for 2010 and beyond. A year older and naturally stronger is a given but the honing of the skills becomes critical leading up and into the next pre-season (only 2 months away), as is the dedication to professionally prepared strength and conditioning programs. The tragedy of Shaun Meredith's knee reconstruction during 2009 has certainly motivated him to undertake every option available before roaring into 2010 and other players have acknowledged that they have development needs that can only be addressed with even better preparation. They will be managed in this regard by a Senior Coach who will leave no stone unturned for 2010. Finally, despite the additional assistance that we now receive from a group of dedicated parents and supporters, if we could receive more support from past players life would be a lot easier. I know many follow us and watch games but for whatever reason are not always able to support our membership options. This will hold the key to our progress in the future. To be part of one of the oldest and most respected club in the VAFA is a privilege and if anyone can help us further in 2010 you will be well rewarded. My time will be limited in 2010 but I hope to contribute to what may well be the most exciting decade at CGFC for a long time. Thank you again for your interest and support.

Geoff Reilley