

SPC shines in front of AFL stars

St Patrick's College 16.9 (104) d Eastern Eaglehawks 12.4 (76)

Goals: Jarrod Korewha 4, Mickitja Rotumah-Onus 4, Jackson Carrick 2, Ben Lusby, Jordyn Cotter, Clay Bilney, Sam Williamson, Matthew Geary, Tanna Blackney-Noter.

Best: Jake McQueen, Jarrod Korewha, Hamish Coulton, Tanna Blackney-Noter, Ben Lusby, Hasker Dawborn.



A unique opportunity for the SPC 1st XVIII to test their mettle against an older opponent in front of a host of AFL premiership stars inspired another strong performance from the boys in the green, white and blue at Waverley this week.

As part of NAIDOC Week activities St Patrick's College was invited to play an exhibition match against the Eastern Eaglehawks – an under 21 team comprised of Indigenous players from the eastern half of Victoria. The Eaglehawks have formed a close affiliation with the Hawthorn Football Club, which generously donated the use of its ground (the former VFL Park at Waverley) to host the inaugural match in ideal conditions on Wednesday, July 7.

Several Hawthorn premiership stars including Shaun Burgoyne and Bradley Hill watched the entire game and were left impressed by what they witnessed as the SPC boys recorded a comprehensive 28-point win against their older and bigger opponents.

Slick ball movement from the opening bounce enabled the 1st XVIII to skip out to an early lead. Extra pace around the pack also enabled SPC players to make full use of the wide expanses of the enormous Waverley ground and continually send the ball deep into attack. There the twin towers of Jarrod Korewha and Mickitja Rotumah-Onus were creating headaches for the Eaglehawks' defence.

At the opposite end of the ground, Hasker Dawborn at centre half-back was repelling many early Eaglehawks' attacks and was cleverly switching play to provide enormous rebound from the defensive 50.

Despite missing up to eight of its best players, the SPC team enjoyed a solid four-goal lead at quarter time. Coach Howard Clark swung some positional changes to ensure all players could make full use of this opportunity to perform on the famous ground in front of a strong crowd.





One positional move which provided enormous dividends was the decision to cast the exciting Tanna Blackney-Noter into the ruck to make full use of his enormous leap and enthusiasm around the ground.

The running brigade including Jake McQueen, Hamish Coulton and Ben Lusby benefited most and were able to move the ball with precision into the SPC forward line.

Hardness around the pack was also a feature with Lusby, in particular, drawing praise from Burgoyne and Hill for his desperate series of bone-crunching tackles late in the game.

Yet, it was far from all one-way traffic. The Eaglehawks, on numerous occasions were able to make full use of their more developed bodies to break tackles and to take contested marks in attack.

In fact, an Eaglehawk four-goal burst in as many minutes in the third quarter breathed new life into the contest as they reeled a 46-point deficit back to just 22 at the last change.

Injuries were also starting to take their toll on the boys in the green, white and blue as the game progressed. Ruckman Sean Bourke was forced from the field with an ankle ligament injury, Tom Williamson suffered a corked thigh while key on-baller Bailey Veale tore a hamstring and is now in doubt as the College prepares for the BAS grand final and its Herald-Sun Shield campaign.

However, SPC steadied early in the final quarter and maintained enough control of the play to ensure the Eaglehawks never really threatened to take the lead.

The final 28-point margin was a fair indication of the gap between the two teams.

Mr Clark said a key pleasing feature was the unselfish nature of his team's play.

"We were able to kick many easy goals from the goalsquare throughout the game because of the way we were willing to share the ball around and always look for the free option," Mr Clark said.

"I was really proud that our boys were not out there seeking glory for themselves but were working for the greater good of the team."

Mr Clark said it is now hoped that this fixture can become an annual event on the SPC football calendar.



"We would love to host the Eaglehawks on the Main Oval next year and then alternate every year after that," he said.

"It is a fantastic concept that their team of Indigenous players challenge us each year as it really helps strengthen our own investment in Indigenous education as we have 52 Indigenous students enrolled at SPC in 2015.

“I would also like to thank the Hawthorn Football Club and Victoria Police for the partnerships they have struck with the Eaglehawks which makes games like this possible.

“It was fantastic for our boys to get the chance to play in front of and speak with such great players as Shaun Burgoyne and Bradley Hill and really learn from them.”

