

De La Defy Odds to Reach Grand Final

By 'The Haymaker'

Football in September is all about tenacity, toughness, guts, resilience and commitment. De La displayed all of these qualities in their come from behind victory to win by 17 points and advance to the Grand Final for the first time since 1993. De La now have a chance to break their 'A' section premiership drought which has stood since 1991 when Mark Lowe, father of current captain David was the club's on-field leader. This all, was despite having three on the bench for the second half and two in reserve for the last quarter. The win was led by De La hero Ben Mannix in his best match for the year, the midfield who led from the front all day with great run, Davidson's fantastic game in defence and Harrison, who booted five goals.

De La started poorly and turned the ball over early, with Uni Blues showing a clearer and more precise method to goal. At quarter time the clearances stood at 12 – 6, a clear win to the Blues. The Dees run and pressure was good but their decision making, especially when the ball got to half forward let them down. Sam Williams was excellent in the first, his explosive run off half back and through the middle set up De La's first two goals through Michael Duggan and Sam Pickett. Although De La were able to have as many scoring shots as Uni Blues (8), their efficiency in-front of the big sticks was poor, converting only two of eight scoring shots. Although, Uni did have 3 lucky bounces on the goal line which resulted in goals. So De La's back half weren't as bad as the score line suggests, Tom Moloney and Ben Oakley were doing excellent jobs on the big Uni forwards; Decrespigny and Paton. At quarter time the Blues took a fancy 20 point lead into the break.

After a lacklustre period in the first, De La looked determined not to have that re-occur. Their pressure especially around the contests improved dramatically, with De La winning the clearances 12 – 8 for the term. The movement forward was more fluent and direct and the strong breeze towards the score-board end was used well by the La Sallian's. There were fewer silly turnovers and the improved pressure allowed the Dees to win the ball back easily and rebound better, with runners Matt Fieldsend, Dan Close, Damian Hale and Sam Williams allowed to run and deliver to Ben Mannix who found form, his strong marking and work rate was excellent. After a much improved performance in the second term. Leigh Harrison was also good in the second with two goals of his own. De La kicked five goals to the Blues three to trail Uni Blues by 8 points at the main break.

After the main break, it took De La a while to adjust to kicking against the breeze. This allowed the red hot Blues to have the first three scoring shots, but luckily for the Dees were only able to kick one goal. De La then snapped into gear through a Ben Mannix floater from 45 to guide one home for the Dees. Then a quick thinking snap from Sam Pickett reduced the margin to just four points. Forward pressure and overall intensity across the ground was very impressive and back to the classic De La we saw for the majority of the 2009 season. De La hit the front after 19 minutes of the quarter through a Matt Fieldsend goal, which set the supporters alight, as Blues heads dropped. Uni were able to level the scores and create an even contest going into the last term. With De La heading down wind, you felt that they would have the advantage but with less on the bench, it could very easily go either way.

In the first fifteen minutes of the last quarter, Uni Blues didn't look like scoring with De La absolutely dominating the play around the ground. De La went ahead with Leigh Harrison booting two goals and one from Sam Pickett. At this point you would have thought the Blues were dead, but they fought back and reduced the margin to just 11 points, however the

Dees were able to re-gather the momentum and kick the last goal, again through Harrison to claim an excellent win. Even more impressive due to the fact that they hadn't defeated Uni Blues in either of the fixture matches this year, in rounds 2 and 15.

After the match, De La Salle Coach Dave Madigan said "I am really proud of the way the players have responded. We know we are much better than our first finals performance. Everyone at the club has tremendous faith in the players. Over the past week not a negative word has been spoken. It is a really positive environment at the moment. We have had solid seasons from our other senior teams and terrific results from our Under 19's. It would be a fantastic reward for the players, committee, helpers and supporters to enjoy the day with a win next Sunday. Either way, expect the players to give a good account of themselves and then, who knows!"

De La has defied odds all year, at the beginning of the year they were tipped as genuine relegation chances. But thanks to the hard work and guidance from Coach Dave Madigan and his assistants, Gus Parker, Tony Morwood and Rob Bonnici, they have turned themselves into a fantastic football outfit which have become a feared force in the VAFA this year. Having defied the odds all year, there is no reason that De La can't do it again this weekend against Old Xav's.

Try and get as many De La supporters as possible down to Sportscover Arena this Sunday from 2pm and help the boys in their quest to win the club their first premiership 'A' section premiership in 18 years.

De La Salle Goals: L. Harrison 5, B. Mannix 3, S. Pickett 3, M. Duggan, M. Fieldsend, D. Lowe, J. Phillips, D. Hale

De La Salle Best: M. Davidson, S. Pickett, L. Harrison, J. Moloney, B. Mannix, A. Shields

DE LA SALLE	2.6	7.8	12.8	16.9-105
UNI BLUES	6.2	9.4	12.8	13.10-88

U19 Blues ... Premiers '09

De La Salle have capped off an excellent season with a brilliant win in the Grand Final against Old Xav's at Central Reserve on Saturday.

De La kicked with a gale wind in the first and didn't use it to advantage, wasting shots in-front of goal and kicking only two of seven shots. Xav's on the other hand took the opportunities they had against the wind and only trailed De La by 5 points after the first term.

After the first term which was disappointing for the Dees, they never looked back. They played well against the breeze in the second to keep the lead at halftime, and then in the 'premiership quarter' ran away with just that to lead by 34 points at the last change.

But despite De La's dominance in the last two quarters, the breeze was still apparent and no one doubted that the game was won. But in the last, the De La side well drilled by coach Jon Edgar kept their cool and delivered the club their 4th under 19 premiership in 6 years.

Congratulations to the boys and all the coaches on a brilliant season.

De La Salle Goals: Z. Dickinson 4, S. Muller 4, T. Parker, S. Griffin, A. Bonaddio, M. De Luca, A. Kneebone, E. Espinosa

De La Salle Best: S. Griffin, S. Muller, Z. Dickinson, T. Hunt, B. Close, A. Bonaddio

DE LA SALLE (BLUES)	2.7	4.10	10.14	14.14-98
OLD XAVERIANS	2.2	4.3	6.4	9.4-58