



2008 WEEKLY WRAP

FINALS WEEK 4

Dan's prayers answered, Fever prevail ...

Jan losing a final shouldn't really surprise anyone. In fact, it would be a bit of a shock if he didn't stumble, Lolo Jones style, over at least one hurdle very close to the finishing line. But when the upstart Farmers trumped them last week to book a place against the Fever in the BMRWFC Grand Final, there was a sense of disbelief around the league, not felt since Sticko went on his magical run in 2005. And how would the Farmers fare against the hulking Fever? Most pundits were expecting something along the lines of Fight Two between Ali and Liston. What they got was more like two rabid dogs going at it, like Buck and Spitz, in a fight to the death.

On Sunday morning, the Farmer dream looked a reality. They were even on score with the Fever, and had two players in hand. But Dan would not be denied again - Joel Corey and Brendon Goddard appeared, riding rays of light from above, to rescue the Fever, and Dan had enough in the tank to claim his second BMRWFC Title. It has been a dominant performance by the Fever - they topped the scores for the year, finished two games clear on top of the ladder, and went undefeated in the finals. Any result other than a premiership would have been a bitter pill to swallow indeed.

Its been a strange journey for the Fever. After their first premiership in 2004, many predicted it was the start of a Brisbane like period of dominance. Certainly Dan has never doubted his own ability –a defining characteristic of his BMRWFC career has been his unshakeable preference to back his talent at the draft board rather than vigilance at the selection table. Pleading for divine intervention, is of course, the exception. Whatever the case, it appears to have worked in 2008.

It was a crushing loss for the Farmers - just a hundred odd extra points would have netted him the coveted prize of a BMRWFC premiership - against all odds. At the start of the Season, Frank gambled by trading for Jeff White and Richo - a move which now looks like unmitigated genius. Richo was almost certainly responsible for 3 wins on his own, and White contributed 108 points for the Farmers in the Grand Final. But where to now? A lot will depend on the playing futures of the aforementioned veterans. If they decide to go around again, then Frank may well have another tilt at the title. In the short term, Frank will shift his attention to more important matters – avoiding the Zero Rating Trophy. Certainly a second place finish will help, but infinity is a very large number to have in the denominator of his zero rating equation.

In the Plate Final, the Death salvaged what they could from a disappointing season by defeating the Ruckmen to finish in third place. There was some consolation for Coach Davo, who now claims the title of All-Time Ratings Champion to go with his four premierships. It will be a sad day indeed when the premiership plate is finally moved from its home on the cabinet and given to Dan. The Ruckmen finish as they always have – just short of the mark.

FINALS WEEK 3

Next weekend, in the BMRWFC's biggest game of the season, the Fever have the opportunity to cap off a dominant season when they square off against surprise grand finalists, the Farmers.

The Fever have the chance to become just the third team in BMRWFC history to win multiple titles. They ruled the roost this year, taking out the minor premiership, posting the highest points-for total and dropping just 3 games for the year. They go into the grand final on a 13 game winning streak and as raging hot favourites.

The Farmers, on the other hand, are the rank outsiders, but they should not be discounted. Despite their capitulation to the Fever in the qualifying final the Farmers have scored solidly in their other finals matches and produced a strong showing late in the season to secure the double chance. They also defeated the Fever in round 3 of this year.

Experience is the big question mark over the the Farmers, as this is their first ever grand final. Until now they have contented themselves with Dockers-like mediocrity in the BMRWFC. But the Farmers have threw all their eggs in this year's basket by trading heavily in the off season for experienced stars Matthew Richardson and Jeff White. Will it pay off?

The bookies have the Fever at \$1.50 and the Farmers at \$2.55.

Into the bronze medal playoff go the Death and the Ruckmen. The Death concede their chance to threeppeat whilst the Ruckmen schmarn their fifth finals campaign in a row. The Ruckmen were favoured for the title at the start of the season but, like Eammon Sullivan, they choked when it counted and under-achieved. They have never won a premiership and frankly don't look like the have the mettle to do so. For the Death, however, there is still plenty to play this week. The Gazz kept alive their chances of retaining their All-Time Ratings Champion's title by narrowly beating the Toolymen into 7th place. However, the Death can overtake them if they take out the bronze. That would be some consolation for an otherwise up and down season.

At the other end of the ladder, the Trucks did live up to expectations by rightfully claiming their second spoon. Trev becomes only the second coach in BMRWFC history to collect more than one spoon. Playing with no ruckman and allowing the opposition to play the entire game with a loose man in attack, didn't help Trev's chances. One wonders what to make of his wooden spoon opponents, the Stickmen. After a debut premiership that sent shockwaves through the competition, the Stickmen have finished 16th, 14th and 15th in consecutive seasons. His year is perhaps typified by his decision to trade for Graham Polak. Still, as Derek would say, any year where you don't finish with the spoon is a good year.

After four years of holding the All-Time Ratings Loser's title Tim manages to cast aside that baggage. Inheriting the title is Steve Pav. After 6 years in this competition he has finished no higher than 10th. His 14th placed finish this year sees his all-time rating slip to a low of 20%.

Speaking of Tim, he was this year's big improver. He climbed from 15th last year to be a force in the finals. Meanwhile, his lowly rating jumped 5.6 percentage points. Frank can also match this achievement if he wins the grand final. At the start of the season only 3 people predicted these coaches to take such large strides.

Finally, for the record, the Giants recorded their lowest ever finish this year by placing 13th.

FINALS WEEK 2

Farmers plough on, Death on life support

They say a week is a long time in football. Seven weeks is obviously a very long time in football, which is how long it has been since the last BMRWFC wrap up.

At the end of the regular season the Fever were in a class of their own - outright leaders and strong favourites to win their second flag. In fact, at times this year, Coach Dan was at risk of being blinded by his own awesomeness. They were not overly impressive in their first finals game, but they were far too good for the Farmers, who performed so badly it was embarrassing. Still, Dan, for all his team's dominance, was seeking divine intervention last week, asking for the "god of luck to rain down on him", unlike previous years. Poor old Dan - I'm sure the thoughts of the entire BMRWFC are with him.

The Farmers were able to rebound (just in time for Frank's birthday no less!), however, as they improved by over 200 points to book a spot against the tortured Ruckmen in the preliminary final next week. The Fwippers, fresh off their defeat of the mighty Gazz (and subsequent dissing) must be rueing a chance missed. They had two no-shows on the weekend, at least one of which was Leo Barry - a clear Thursday night omission by the Swans. Perhaps Coach Phil was out to prove that, contrary to Garry's advice, a score in the 1900's would be good enough. It wasn't.

The Ruckmen were in poor shape before the finals started. They limped through the last few rounds of the regular season, and just like he has missed two consecutive lad's trips to Melbourne, Jan was bracing himself for the disappointment of again missing out on a BMRWFC premiership. And then came the Franklin, Pavlich and Bartel show. Facing the reigning premier Death in the opening round of the finals, the Ruckmen executed a stunning 500 point turn-around to win the day and earn a weeks rest before the preliminary final. Can Jan replace Heath Shaw for the run home? If Franklin keeps on going, he won't need to!

After finishing the regular season with the second highest points tally, behind only the Fever, the Death looked set for another strong showing. Then they ran straight into the Ravn express, and were sent to face the late charging Orgazmo's in a sudden death final. The Orgazmo's defeated the Death in the last week of the season to sneak into the finals, but this week, it was Davo's chance for redemption. And redeem himself he did, but it was more like a 5c per litre fuel discount at BP than a two for one whopper deal, as the Death were most unimpressive in their win. They must now face the Fever in next week's preliminary final, with a team that's form is symbolized, in more ways than one, by the image of Richo limping off the ground at the end of last week's game. Its disappointing for the O's, but Coach Denno must take some solace from the fact that he may have done enough to shed the tag of April premiers.

Coach Cakey has long been an advocate of extending the BMRWFC season and this year he got his wish. Sadly for the Ballbaggers, it cost them a spot in the finals, as they slipped out of the eight in round 17, replaced by the Orgazmos. And after posting score of over 2200 this week, Cakey will be left wondering "if only" yet again. They monstered the Buddhas, beating them by exactly 500 points and will pick up yet another high draft pick. The question is, much like the Saints, when will they do anything with all those blue chip players? For the Buddhas, who's season finished last week after they avoided the spoon, anything from here was a bonus. However, just like in the capitalist world that Derek so vehemently advocates, insipid performance is not rewarded, so no bonus.

The Craakers have had an up and down season, and after narrowly defeating the Sickmen last week, they must have felt confident. So confident in fact, they submitted a team for next week's game, not bothering with the formality of facing the Devils this week. Unfortunately for Jorgo, last week's winning line-up was not good enough to win this week. After finishing the regular season in lowly 13th, the Devils have charged into the repechage finals with renewed vigour, posting scores close to 2100 both weeks. They are now assured of the number one

pick in League Two next year. They managed to see off the Craakers, despite leaving Ben McKinley and his seven goals in the bank.

The Giants have probably come to the same conclusion West Coast has. Do not change your name or jumper after enjoying a modicum of success. Last year, under the United moniker, Coach Steve finished 7th. This year they have managed to avoid a spoon playoff thanks mainly to their good fortune of facing the Trucks this week. Even so, it was a close fought thing - the Trucks posting a respectable 1989. The Giants got home in the end.

The Stickmen have been anything but impressive since they shocked the BMRWFC world with a premiership in 2005. They came up against last year's spoon winners, the Pavlovas, and continued their unimpressiveness, and will play-off for their second spoon in three years.

Based on this weeks performance, getting a full 22 players on the park could be the deciding factor.

FINALS WEEK 1

No report.

ROUND 18

An incredibly tight finish to this year's BMRWFC regular season, with just points for determining the final places in the top 4 and final 8. Remarkably the Gazz Jazz and the Fwippers managed to ride their luck - and a favourable draw - into the finals (finishing 5th and 6th respectively) despite having a lower overall points for than 1 or 2 teams outside the top 8. The final round saw the Jaatzie Craakers stumble out of the eight at the last hurdle. Like Cadel Evans they found the weight of expectation just too much and conceded advantage to the Orgazmos and to the Farmers. The former advancing into the top 8 after upsetting reigning premiers the Death, and the later consolidating his place in the top 4 and earning the double chance.

The big losers from the extended fixtures this season were the Ballbaggers, who slipped from 7th to 9th, and the Jazz, who dropped from 4th to 5th. The big beneficiaries were the Orgazmos, capping a remarkable comeback by climbing from 10th to 8th, and the Farmers, who swapped places with the Jazz.

ROUND 13 - 17

No report.

ROUND 12

Buddhas da shiznit, Fever keep on rolling

Vesak is the major festival of the Buddhist calendar, celebrating the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha. It usually occurs in May, with the exception being leap years where the festival shifts to June. This explains a lot of things. While you could argue that Derek has never really had a good May, he is having the June of his life. Three wins in a row and 2000 point plus scores - what's next, the top eight? This week it was the Giants who fell victim to the Buddha's serenity, going down by 120 points. The unexpected loss of Rischitelli was a blow, but even he probably wouldn't have done enough to secure a win. The Buddhas had answers all over the field - Scott Thompson on 165, Matthew Boyd on 144, Jonathan Brown on 143, and the games biggest cheat since Matthew Lloyd invented flopping, Adam Goodes on 129. The Giants fall a spot to tenth, while the Buddhas climb two spots to an exhilarating thirteenth. Any higher and we will have to call him Tenzing.

The Ballbaggers carried confidence and a three game win streak into their match with the Devils, having just climbed into the eight after a mediocre start. The Devils, with their backs

to wall, rose to the challenge, pipping the Ballbaggers by 3 points in a cliff-hanger. Both teams lost players before the bounce, and the Devils had the added challenge of Nathan Basset, who many say has the biggest head in the AFL, scoring just three points. Enter Fevola for Coach Mark, whose score of 172 was enough to get his team over the line. Unfortunately for Mark, winning with a score of just 1797 was not enough to hold his place on the ladder. As difficult as this image is to visualize, he was leapfrogged by Derek. The Ballbaggers, perhaps fortunately, remain steady in eighth.

When I texted Jan on Saturday asking if the Death were playing the Ruckmen, I received the curt reply "Hope so, need a win". Unless you are Garry, such statements usually earn you some bad Karma. Not the case this week, as the Ruckmen handled the Fwippers, winning by just over 100 points. It was a high quality game, befitting a 3rd versus 5th match up, but the heroics of Adam Cooney did the job for Jan. The Ruckmen remain in third, equal on wins with the Fever and the Death, while the Fwippers are also steady in 5th.

The Pavlova's have alternated between winning and losing since round 7. This week it was winning's turn, and the Tooty Men happily obliged, scoring just 1880 to ensure the trend continued. The Pavs were led by their young stars in van Berlo, Griffen, Lewis, Murphy, Deledio and Salopek, all of whom bettered 100 points. The Tooty Men appear to be losing their way, slowly slipping down the ladder to 7th, perhaps fortunate not to have fallen further. The Pavlova's are now in tenth, separated from the eight only by points for.

Denno decided to take a mid season break from the chilly London summer by heading off to..... Ireland, and appointed Davo to watch over his team. The change seems to have worked, as the Orgazmo's were inspired to another win, this team defeating the lowly Stickmen. As difficult as the tribunal's decisions are to decipher, there was very little mystery around Heath Black's fate - he was clearly suspended. Apparently this came as a surprise to Coach Johnno, or perhaps he was making a silent protest? Whatever the case, Sticko named him to play, and like Kevin Rudd policy, it proved to be a costly symbolic gesture. They went down by just 67 points and fall to 15th spot, while the Orgazmos are agonizingly close to the top eight.

Any time your score nearly 2200 points and lose, you know you have been unlucky. That is the fate that befell the poor old Gazz this weekend, as they went down to the storming Farmers. I know Dan shed a tear. Frank did it with style too, managing 2227 points despite being a player down - having 13 players score over 100 points is always a good thing, and Frank now finds himself a game clear in the eight, at sixth spot. The Gazz are not really suffering either, remaining in 4th spot just one win behind the leading trio.

Homer Simpson once said "I'm not a praying man, but if you're up there...save me Superman!". Jorgo may well be looking to the Man of Steel for help, as he slumped to the second longest current losing streak in the BMRWFC. Three weeks ago, the Craakers looked to have their season back on track and were looking to lock up a finals appearance, but things have certainly turned pear shaped since then. Things were always going to be tough coming up against the sizzling Fever, and Dan did not disappoint, winning by over 200 points. They consolidate their stance at the top of the ladder, while the Craakers are on kryptonite, falling to twelfth.

Homer also once told his kids that if you try your best and fail miserably, the lesson is to never try. No-one could ever accuse Trev of not trying, but so far he has failed miserably. The Death were staggering, having suffered two straight losses and looked in danger of a third when Daniel Kerr was omitted before the weekend even got underway. Fortunately for Davo, he came up against the last placed Trucks and Kerr was not needed. Richo's magnificent efforts (173) were eclipsed only by Adam Cooney (177), and the Death remain in second spot. Trev remains in last.

ROUND 11

Buddhas on streak, Death in a spiral ...

After Round 9 the Buddhas were winless, in danger of being pantsed, and more of a laughing stock than usual. Fast forward to the end of Round 11, and they have won two straight, own the record for the highest score the year, and not only has Derek put his pants back on, he's wearing jocks! It was a staggeringly impressive performance by any measure - twelve players scored over 100 points and six over 140 points (if you count plastic fantastic Nick Malceski on the bench). The unfortunate victims were the Farmers who were far from disgraced with their score of 2101 despite losing Joel Selwood before the game. Of course, this is small consolation for Frank - a loss to the very person with whom he is locked in fight for the Zero Weighting Trophy is never good! The Farmers remain in seventh, while the Buddhas rapid climb to 15th must have Derek at risk of cerebral oedema.

The Fwippers were cruising along so comfortably before round 10 that you could excuse them for thinking that hand fed, free fish were a normal way of life. Not so, someone must have slipped them a rotten sardine, as their 5 game win streak came to a shuddering halt, when they scored just 1561 against the Fever. Things returned to normal this week, however, as they posted a narrow win over the Trucks. Clearly, facing Trev is not nearly as daunting as facing Dan, but Trev's loss of Pendlebury and Phil's inclusion of the injured Kane Johnson means the Fwippers were fortunate indeed. Whatever, Coach Phil got the job done, and the Fwippers join the gridlock of teams at the top of the ladder on 8 wins. Trev bears the brunt of Derek's unlikely ascendancy, and falls to last. He wouldn't have hurt himself if it were a fall in real life.

The Ruckmen are showing they mean more business than a Friday lunchtime meeting, winning seven of their last eight and occupying third spot on the ladder. After being upset by the Ballbaggers last week, Jan made short work of the Pavlova's thanks to monster efforts by Franklin, Jonathan Brown and Pavlich - a forward line that would make many a BMRWFC coach weep. Of course, Franklin playing half forward is a travesty of Chris Hyde proportions and may be rectified by the Player Position Committee before the season is out.

Cakey is proving that he does in fact have some substance over symbolism, crushing the Tooly Men and winning his third straight. The Ballbaggers are clinging to eighth spot and appear to be on the charge, due in no small part to the form of Franklin and Ablett - perhaps the two greatest freaks in the game. After starting the season five and zero, the Tooly Men have won just two of their last six games and fall two places to sixth. Can they hang on? The last thing Tim needs is to end up like Tanya Zaetta instead of Meg Ryan.

The Orgazmos stole a much needed win from the Devils, getting up by just thirty three points in a thriller. Suspense was building all the way through to Monday's Queen's Birthday clash, made all the more interesting when Anthony Rocca failed to front for the Devils. It was a sad weekend for Coach Mark, who also had to endure a West Coast heart breaker and a Kiwi cricket team demolition - both of which are common realities! After a promising 2007, the Devils are struggling and find themselves in the unwelcome company of the Stickmen, Buddhas, and the Trucks on two wins.

The Gazz Jazz brought their roadshow to Western Australia and celebrated in style - winning three games on the trot. The blessing of his marriage to Melissa at the Cott Hotel was a highlight, and Garry's dominance of the microphone proved once and for all that he is, indeed, the Rhymnoceros. Who then, is the Hip-hop-apatamus? It sure as hell isn't Jan, who demonstrated his breathtaking ability to schmarn his mates by choosing a weekend away with his girlfriend (again) instead of attending the wedding. At least he wasn't at a Dick Meeting. Still, all this travel must be catching up with the Gazz - this week's win over the Stickmen was by just 10 points, and only because Byron Schammer went Jan and didn't show.

The Giants trade with the Stickmen has shown immediate results, turning a three game losing streak in a two game run of wins. Of course Coach Stephe was playing with fire by naming Welsh before the BMRWFC Committee had a chance to endorse the trade, but for now the scoreboard shows the results. They were simply too strong for the depleted Craakers, who slip one further place away from the top eight.

Age may finally be catching up with the creaky Death, who fell to their second straight loss - and this one was a big one - thumped by the Fever to the tune of 250 points. Dan, ever the humble winner, didn't wait until Monday's game had been played to call Davo and alert him to the fact that the Fever had displaced the Death from top spot. What a weekend for Dan - he also called when Davo was on the train after the West Coast game, asking about "those Swannies". I shall remember your humility, Dan, when the Kangaroos fold. Winners are grinners, as the saying goes, and if you discount the Buddhas, the Fever are now the hottest team in the BMRWFC. Five straight wins, top spot, and laughing.

ROUND 10

No report.

ROUND 9

Ruckmen stand tall, Fwippers keep swimming ...

After an indifferent start to the season, the Ruckmen are starting to live up to their reputation - no, not as chokers, but rather the one as pre-season premiership favourites. They are now officially the hottest team in the BMRWFC- their win over the Orgazmos was their 6th in a row, and sees them improve to third place on the ladder. Sadly for Denno, as he warmly embraces the arrival of the London summer, he must also bid adieu to April, by far his best month in the BMRWFC. The loss sees them slip out of the eight.

The Fwippers have flirted with success in the BMRWFC, much like Jan picking up girls at a nightclub - tantalizingly close, but always failing to close the deal - usually as a result of some horrible misfortune. Will this year be their chance? Their win over the Giants was not exactly awe inspiring, but a win is a win and they deserve their spot in the upper reaches of the ladder. Despite the loss, the Giants are still hanging tough, just a game out of the eight. Surely Coach "Stephe" would be cursing Graeme Polak, who's failure to show up cost him the win!

Everyone knows Dan is good West Australian right? Wrong. Apparently visiting Melbourne briefly during his childhood left enough of an impression on the youngster that he is now a card carrying supporter of the Big V. It is little surprise then, that Victoria's emotional victory over the Dream Team has fired Dan up for some impressive performances in the BMRWFC, and he showed no mercy in belting the Pavlova's by near on 300 points. Come to think of it, Dan must be approaching Nirvana - a come from behind win by Kangaroos over West Coast would send him to levels of rapture that could only be equalled if he were watching a new episode of Project Runway.

The Ballbaggers are doing what they need to do to keep the finals dream alive, with a big win over the Trucks. It was a throwback performance by the Ballbaggers, with their young line-up shown the way by a couple of cagey veterans in Embley (152) and Fletcher (137). Just as they looked to be building momentum, the Trucks now appear unable to cope with increasing cost of diesel, grinding to halt in 15th spot.

In many respects, the Gazz are like The Terminator. Coach Garry bears more than a passing resemblance to Arnie, and his BMRWFC team just keeps on coming. Actually, their narrow defeat of the Tooly Men was more like a blow from David Hasselhoff than a blast from Arnie's sawn off shotgun, but you get the picture. The Tooly Men's early season ascendancy was a

feel good story, but the question is, will Coach Tim end up more like Meg Ryan in *Sleepless in Seattle*, or Mel Gibson in *Braveheart*? The Tooty Men drop two places to fifth with the loss.

Coach Mark was more than a little troubled when, on Saturday night, on his way to the Footy, he realized he had forgotten to submit his BMRWFC team. As it turned out, he needn't have worried. It didn't rain, West Coast won and he was playing the Buddhas - the BMRWFC version of the bye week. Derek may well have eyed this week as a chance for notching up his first win - after all, the none-to-impressive Devils were languishing in 15th spot. But it just wasn't to be - two no-shows (Sinclair and Thornton) sealed the Buddha's fate. Two questions still remain for Derek? First, can they be pantsed and go the whole season without a win? Second, would anyone want to see Derek without his pants on?

Is it a bird? Is it a train? Is it the Docker's 4th quarter lead disappearing? No, it's the Jaatzie Craakers in their bullet-like rise into the top eight. After enduring a run of luck that would have made Jan cry, the Craakers have turned the tables, winning three games in a row, the last of which propelled them three spots up the ladder. Interestingly, Jorgo's good run of form corresponds closely to the return of Joel Bowden - the world's worst full back and best cheap possession getter. Whatever the case, Jorgo is flying high. Not so for the Stickmen, who continue to struggle with just two wins for season and appear anchored to 14th spot. The best thing about the Stickmen currently, is that the Trucks and the Buddhas are in the BMRWFC.

The last game of the round was the "Richo Bowl" between the Farmers and the Death, and the quality of the game was befitting of its namesake (albeit, without the hissy fits). Only the absence of Bret Thornton and Jeff White robbed the Farmers their chance to knock off the first placed Death. Of course, you could argue that by naming White at CHF, Frank got what he deserved. And trouble could be brewing in both camps in the weeks ahead, with rumours that Richo's knee may keep him out of action... The Death remain a game clear on top while the Farmers are also steady at 7th.

ROUND 8

No report.

ROUND 7

Here come the Gazz ...

To be voted "Team most likely to fall from grace" by your peers would be an emotional blow, probably causing self-doubt to creep into one's thinking. Unless, of course, you are the Gazz Jazz. Coach Garry has confounded his critics (The Fever mostly so), achieved something West Coast have been unable to do (overcome the loss of Rowan Jones) and notched up a league leading 2115 points while thrashing the Orgazmo's. The Gazz now have 5 wins and are firmly entrenched in the top eight. April ended last week, as did the Orgazmo's run of good form. They crash to their third straight loss and remain in ninth spot.

The Fwippers were too good for the drooping Ballbaggers, running out victors by almost two hundred points. The game lost a bit of its sparkle when each coach lost a blue chip midfielder before the bounce (Simon Black for the Fwippers and Garry Ablett for the Ballbaggers), but Coach Phil proved up to the task, benefiting from Andrew Carazzo collecting 176 uncontested possessions against the West Coast. The season looks bright for the Fwippers sitting in third, but what about the Ballbaggers? Their young list promises so much, but desultory performances are not getting the job done. Still, they are on three wins just a game outside the eight with a long way to go.

Speaking of youngsters, the Pavlova's boast a few quality ones - Salopek, Kennedy, Lewis, Boak - but they came up against a seasoned Death line-up lead by the incomparable Richo, who accumulated a lazy 153 points in guiding his team to victory. The Death, who have had their fair share of fortunate early season wins, jump to top spot on the table, while the Pavlovas are steady on three wins in eleventh.

In attempting to win his first game of the season over the struggling Craakers, Derek needed to lose Jonathon Brown and Brad Symes before the bounce down like he needs a fifth friend at a golfing weekend. Not even extra butter chicken helped the Buddhas this week, and predictably they got walloped by 200 points and remain where they belong - last. The Craakers have finally evened out the "luck" ledger on the premiership table as they get their third win and remain in twelfth - but losing Riewoldt for a couple of months is misery on tap for Jorgo.

It's never a good sign when you hang your game plan on the fortunes on one player. It is pure lunacy when that player is Des "I'll take the easy option" Headland, which is exactly what Sticko did by naming the oft-absent forward. Headland failed to show and the Stickmen should probably have followed his example, as they got slapped, Bhajji-style, by the Fever. The Fever secured the victory despite missing Simon Black and Scott West, the latter serving a self imposed suspension for being a soft-cock diver. They now sit in seventh position, arguably six places below where they should be. Hearts are bleeding all around the league for the luckless Fever.

With Cakey's transition to the private sector now complete, Frank, with his 2 week boondoggle to China, has assumed the mantle of most heavily tax-payer supported BMRWFC coach. Whatever he learned in China, it appears to be helping, as the Farmers hit their straps on the weekend, scoring over 2000 points and easily defeating the Giants. Both teams remain in the top eight - the Farmers in 6th, Giants 8th.

In years gone past, a match between the Trucks and Tooty Men would have the right of first refusal on being called the Who Cares Bowl. This year, however, it was a match between the top of the table Tooty-Men, and the fifteenth placed Trucks, and should have been as one sided as Chris Waterman. Alas, it was not to be, as Coach Tim found the pressure of being the hunted a little too much handle. The Trucks will be celebrating their second win like Carnival in Rio, as they climb two spots to thirteenth. Beware the altitude sickness Trev.

The Devils and the West Coast share many players and now they have even more in common - they both sit second last on the ladder with little or no hope for the season ahead. To be fair, the loss of Bateman and Rocca was costly for Coach Mark, as they went down to the moderately impressive Ruckmen. Coach Jan is yet to extract peak form from his team, but, perhaps ominously, still sits on five wins and in fifth place.

ROUND 6

No report.

ROUND 5

Fever Tooled up, Fwippers fwyng, April ends early for Orgazmos

Less than a year ago, the Tooty Men were grimly fixing bayonets in an effort to stave another spanking by the wooden spoon. Fast forward to Round 5 2008, and they have completed a dream start to the season, knocked off the Fever, and sit a game clear of top of the ladder. Lets not fool ourselves - the Fever didn't try too hard, perhaps unable to focus, mad-dog Moody-like, on both the the upcoming draft and the match at hand - but the Tooty Men have been very impressive. They topped 2000 points for the 4th straight time, this week scoring 2146 in a close victory over the Fever. The Fever remain in third, leading a pack of eight clubs on three wins, with the only real question being how long Coach Dan will persevere with Joel Bowden while Terry Wallace does not.

The Fwippers were almost as impressive as the Tooty Men in their caning of the second placed Death, boasting a handy 12 players who scored over 100 points in the victory. They improve a spot to sixth on the ladder, while the Death were fortunate to remain in second. On

Sunday, Coach Davo had the dubious pleasure of witnessing one of his stars (Kane Cornes) wear another (Daniel Kerr) like a new Speedo swimsuit. It ended badly for Kerr and for Davo.

The young Pavlova line-up returned to earth with a thud on the weekend, but their fall was amply cushioned by the Buddhas, who are occupying the bottom of the BMRWFC tank like a school of Clown Loach. A bright spot for Derek, against an ink black background, was the form of youngster Brad Symes. Despite the win, the Pavs fell a spot to tenth, while the Buddhas had nowhere to go.

The Ballbaggers were talking up their victory over the Orgazmos early in the week, blaming the O's defeat on their over-reliance on Ballbagger discard Guerra. Denno, was probably more concerned with the absence of Tadgh Kenneally, who played a more important role (or lack their-of) in the 100 point loss. It may have cost the Orgazmos a stubby holder, but they remained erect in fourth place on the ladder. Has the worm turned for the Ballbaggers? Having promised so much for so long, they have provided less fulfilment than a Richard Marx love song, but a bevy of young stars that include Ablett, Franklin, and Young are leading the way. They get their second win of the season and remain in 11th.

The Gazz and the Craakers fought a ferocious battle, the lead changing hands more often than Denmark changes allegiances. Perhaps more desperate to avoid an Eagle like 1 and 4 start, the Craakers got over the line, even after losing Danyle Pearce before the ball was bounced. The Gazz didn't have any obvious weaknesses, but simply had too many players who were too mediocre. Welcome to the monotony of married life Gazz!

The Melbourne Derby promised to be a tough game, but the Giants put together a solid performance that was good enough to trounce the over-matched Stickmen. The margin exceeded 250 points in the end, and the Stickmen must be scratching their heads - have they lost their appetite for competition, like the conspicuously absent Brett Peake has lost the drive to play football? The Giants win sees them improve to ninth, only a few points for separating them from the top eight.

The only interesting aspect of the Farmer Frank/Tasman Devil match-up was the fact that the game was coached in absentia - Frank in China and Mark's whereabouts unknown. It showed too, with the Farmers meagre total of 1854 good enough for a 115 point victory. A tonic for the Devils, however, was their ability to snare two more West Coast players in the Round 5 draft after falling to thirteenth place on the ladder. The Farmers clung to eighth spot.

The Ruckmen, who were hot premierships favourites at the start of the year, have failed to evoke any excitement with their current form. Perhaps playing second fiddle for so long has left Jan with a permanent inferiority complex, much like the clash jersey wearing Kangaroos are treated like Collingwood's bitch. Fortunately for the Ruckmen, they were playing the hapless Trucks, who were denied their second victory only by the late withdrawal of Lappin and Gibbs. The Ruckmen remain in sixth place while the Trucks are pressing the flesh with the Buddhas - second last.

ROUND 4

Orgazmos, much?

Denno's nomadic wanderings have taken him from Dublin, to London to Dubai, and then back to London in recent years, so little wonder that the Orgazmos have been neither here nor there. But the new found stability of a child and house renovations appear to have given them a winning bent. The Orgazmos lead the league with 2149 points this week thrashing the Buddhas in a rout not seen since Manassas. Coach Denno's dramatic rise has been due in no small part, to the recruitment of Ballbagger discard Brent Guerra, who has enjoyed the greatest resurrection since Colonel Brubaker in Capricorn One. For the Buddhas, its business as usual, falling one spot to last, but before judging Derek too harshly, consider that he has had the most points out of anyone scored against him!

The ever-present Gazz took advantage of an undermanned Fwipper outfit to record their third win of the season, squashing talk of a matrimonial slump. It was not an overly impressive win, but four no-shows at the Fwippers was always going to be hard to overcome. The Gazz move up a spot to 6th, while the Fwippers drop 2 places to 6th.

In a battle for who could field the most highly touted youngsters, the Pavlova's triumphed over the Ballbaggers 2025 to 1820. Its the second win for Coach Steve, who looks to be on the rise - much like Nick Steven's belt size. Pav must have been eagerly anticipating the victory, as he, along with 25,000 other Freo supporters, headed home early from Subiaco yesterday afternoon. It is not all doom and gloom for the Ballbaggers - while they appear to be struggling with just the single win, their overall points tally is almost good enough for a top eight position.

Terry Wallace may have had noble intentions when he named Joel Bowden on Thursday night, despite not taking the fullback impostor to Perth, in order to avoid a media storm over his axing. Cold comfort for Jorgo, though, is it likely cost him a win over the reigning premiers, going down by 124 points. Things were looking grim for the Death, but late game heroics from Mathew Richardson (167) got them over the line. Monster games by Fevola, McMahon and Fletcher all went to waste for the Craakers, who must now wonder who they can call for help. Candy, perhaps?

Good performances by the Tooty Men shouldn't really surprise anyone anymore, but like Freo fans booing their own, it is always comes as a bit of a shock. Apart from a rotten run at the end of 2007, Coach Tim has steadily improved his team since a run of form that saw him collect enough spoons for a dinner party. Clearly not a BMRWFC dinner party, where spoons are not required, but you get the picture. This week they smashed the Devils by almost 400 points, scoring 2147 points, and claiming top spot on the ladder. The Devils reduced their West Coast contingent to just 3 players this week, and fortunately for Coach Mark, he did not name starry-eyed Staker. It did little to help as they slide 3 places to 12th.

Looking for more surprises? Look no further than the nothing-if-not-persistent Trucks, who won their first game of the year over the Stickmen. Consistency often precedes success in the BMRWFC, and putting a solid line-up on the field has finally paid dividends for Coach Trev, and were it not for the late loss of Scott Burns, the Trucks may have given the 2000 point barrier a tickle. The win sees them heft themselves from the sucking quagmire of last place - question is, did they leave their boots behind? The Stickmen fall one spot to 14th.

In recent weeks we asked the question, who can stop the Fever? The answer probably should have been no-one but the Fever themselves, as they failed to submit a team and went into their match with the Farmers 3 players down. It is well known that Coach Dan covets a higher pick in the upcoming draft, so don't be surprised to see another pathetic effort next week. Frank is the beneficiary, however, as he retraces the steps of Gazz by taking the Farmers on a 2 week long dogf#ck into China. The question remains - will Frank also be forced to endure the round 5 draft under the censoring eye of Chinese control, like Garry before him?

The powerful Ruckmen have been courting success this year like a western version of the nanpa, but this week, they were not to be shmarned, running out winners over the Giants 1978 to 1813. Both the Ruckmen and the Giants now have two wins, on opposite sides of the luck spectrum.

ROUND 3

Tooly Men on fire, bottom five has familiar look to it ...

The Tooty Men have continued their red hot start to the season, claiming a third straight win and climbing to second spot on the ladder. They did it in style too, with 11 players scoring 100+ on their way to amassing 2034 points. Coach Tim named an unorthodox forward line

with Cameron Cloke at CHF and Josh Fraser at Full forward - (rivalled in unusual-ness only by the Fever's backline), but as it turned out, the only problem caused was arguments over who would take the ruck knocks. There is a sense of harmony in the Tooty Men line up - how far can they go? The Stickmen were solid, but simply not good enough to get their second win, and settle at 13th spot on the ladder.

The Fwippers were convincing as they dealt cross town rival Pavlovas a sizeable loss, scoring 2116 points with help from Chad Cornes (181) Sewell (175), and Barry Hall (140). They improve their record to 2 and 1 and occupy 4th spot - perhaps a little unlucky not to be higher. The Pavlova's young line-up performed well, and if not for the absence of Damon White, might have given this contest a real shake. Ipso Facto, they have just the one win and languish in 14th place.

Coach Garry was under the pump on the weekend - could he prove his busking credentials by successfully juggling the veritable chainsaws of his own wedding and his BMRWFC team? No problems, as it was Cakey who wore the bridesmaid's outfit (and probably also dropped the bouquet) losing in a close fought affair. The Gazz, in spite of popular predictions of downfall, continue to frustrate their oppositions, and move up three spots on the ladder to 6th. The Ballbaggers disappointing start continues, as they slump to 10th.

The Orgazmos continue to arouse respect with a stunning win over the Craakers. They scored the second highest total for the round (2118) thanks to the return to form of Judd and typical performances by Geelong stars Corey and Chapman. The Craakers got shmarned by Eagleton at the selection table for the second time in three weeks, and like Carlton, could not be saved by the heroics Fevola. In fact, the Craakers appear to be defined by recalcitrant forwards - the double act of Fev and Tarrant has caused Coach Jorgo piles of angst over the years...

The Death had another colourless performance on the weekend, but thankfully for Coach Davo, he was playing the Buddhas, who were typically waxen. A bright light for Coach Derek is the form of Paul Johnson - a player he picked up with the first overall pick in the draft several years back, finally coming good. Be that as it may, the Buddhas are firmly wedged in 15th place on the ladder - territory so familiar for Derek he could give tours.

The Farmers needed their best performance of the year to pip the Ruckmen for win number 1 in 2008. Like Alistair Clarkson, Coach Frank made revolutionary use of rotations to secure the win - his 4 bench players of Deledio, Johncock, Hudson and Foley all scored over 100 points (before discount). The highly fancied Ruckmen are not off the start they would have liked, slumping to 1 win 2 losses but can still take comfort in their 8th position. The loss of McPharlin prior to bounce down was a cruel blow to Coach Jan, one which he never recovered from.

The West Coast Fever suffered a dramatic collapse on the weekend, succumbing to the Firebirds in the last quarter. No such problems for the original Fever, who thundered their way to a third straight victory over the Giants. Once again, their much vaunted full back line of Kane Cornes (125) Chad Cornes (181) and Joel Corey (151) were instrumental. Its early days, but the question must be asked - who can beat the Fever? Obviously not the previously undefeated Giants, who's luck ran out as they crashed to a big defeat and fell 3 spots to 7th on the ladder.

The Devils broke through for their first win of the season, and did it in style with 2019 points. Coach Mark played 5 Eagles on the weekend, including debutante Scott Selwood, but the trail was blazed by Peter Burgoyne on 177. The Trucks had a consistent performance, the problem being that at the moment, their consistent best is just not good enough. A full 22 players could only serve up 1690 points for Coach Trev, with only 2 players cresting the 100 point mark, and Trev's much sprouted youth policy was not really on display - with the likes of Lappin, Bruce, Shannon Grant, Scott Burns, Nathan Thompson, Brett Burton and Dean Brogan all included in the first 18. The Tucks are in last place.

ROUND 2

Milestones and mire for the Trucks, Fever continue on their way

Mark your calendars. This past Sunday could well be the nexus in the Truck's long and winding road to the summit. For the first time since round 7 in 2007, Trev managed to coax a full 22 players onto the field for their battle with arch-rival Fever. Like a Des Headland celebration after kicking a goal when his side trails by more than ten goals, the joy was perhaps misplaced, but Coach Trev must enjoy the little steps along the way. Predictably, the Fever did enough to win, but Dan would now doubt be pi\$\$ed off about including Kane Johnson in his line-up.

The Fwippers bounced back from a disappointing round 1 loss to score the highest points of the round and give the Orgazmos a veritable whack with a spoon. Lead by specialist back pocket player Daniel Cross (169), and the player who has replaced Rowan Jones as the player with the punniest hairstyle in the AFL - Brent Stanton (134), the Fwippers managed to score 2087 - comfortably beating the Orgazmos on 1951. Still, there are good signs for Coach Denno, who is now approaching his historically best performed period for the club - April.

The Pavlovas, perhaps resigned to at least another year with the worst name in the BMRWFC, fought back from an embarrassing first round capitulation to record a win over the Craakers. Coach Steve's youth policy was on full display on the weekend, fielding a line-up that included youngsters Morton, Boak, van Berlo, Murphy, Luenberger, Tippet, Salopek, Higgins, Deledio and Griffen. Watch out as these guys get more experience! Jorgo must have stepped on a Craaker in the footpath on the way to the Coach's box on the weekend - were it not for razzle-dazzle performances by Goodwin (183) and Bartel (168) it would have been a dark day out indeed.

The Ballbaggers and the Death have a bitter history of confrontation - each doling out finals pain to the other in recent years. This encounter was as hard fought as ever, albeit played at a relatively low standard, with the Death triumphing by a measly 55 points. It was not an impressive showing by the reigning premiers, with victory assured only by a mountainous performance by Dean Cox (183). Coach Cakey, in a flash of derring-do, named Chris Master in his first ever AFL game - surely one of the few BMRWFC players to have experienced the honour?

Garry made sure that his season start did not degenerate further by recording a 200+ point victory over the Buddhas. The Gazz were simply solid across the board, with Cameron Bruce the only real weakness. The Buddhas must be secretly chafing at the unavailability of such club names as the "Ruckmen" and the "Giants" after they boasted a line-up on the weekend that included Jolly, Roughead, Jonathan Brown, Brad Fisher, Nathan Thompson, Paul Johnson, Jason Blake, Quintin Lynch and Adam Goodes. Unfortunately for Derek, he is yet understand the correlation between tallness and stupidity - a lesson learned long ago by Jorgo.

The Stickmen took advantage of a floundering Farmer outfit, who appeared unable to balance the triple duties of farm owner, wedding MC and football coach on the weekend. They went into the match undermanned, thanks to the late withdrawal of Mackie and Eagleton, and never recovered, going down by just over 100 points. The Stickmen showed some pluck after an embarrassing first round loss - and managed to out-coach Frank, simply by naming Byron Schammer once only. Following in the footsteps of Cakey, Sticks named debutante Rhys Palmer in his first AFL game and was rewarded with 103 points!

In a battle of the new names, it was the Giants who prevailed over a disappointing Devils. So go the Eagles go the Devils, and this week the going was not good. The Giants were all over the Devils like Simon Goodwyn over the West Coast backline, thrashing them by over 200

points. Coach Mark will be looking for high scoring, free flowing derby next weekend, while the Giants will hope to their seasons consists of more games like round 2, not round 1.

The Tooty Men look determined to avenge their embarrassing late season slide, as they convincingly beat the much fancied Ruckmen to take 3rd spot on the ladder. The hay was made by Cox, Goodwyn, Bock and Stokes, and the sun was shining on Coach Tim, as his team notched up 2005 points to the Ruckmen' 1902. Its too early for alarm bells down at the Ruckmen camp, but Coach Jan would have seen his match up with the Tooty Men as an big opportunity to go 2 and 0.

ROUND 1

Ladder surprises no one as Fever look ominous

The Craakers have been so unlucky in recent years that walking under a ladder may well have improved their fortune. Perhaps Coach Jorgo donned new clothes for Easter, for the lady was on his side against the Fwippers, stealing a 7 point over last years Plate finalists. A winning score of 1790, lead by Brendan Lade and the reinvented forward Beau Waters, is not overly impressive, but good enough to better the Fwippers who could only muster 1783. Coach Phil, who battled a dodgy email account over summer, had also to deal with a dodgy Scott Lucas knee, which probably cost him the game. Lets hope the Fwippers can find more balance after the loss of Lucas - who is so one sided he makes Tony Shaw look like a UN mediator.

The Orgazmos proved that you don't have to watch any footy to put together a good BMRWFC team. Scrub that. They proved you don't have to watch any footy to beat the Pavlovas, who hardly even broke stride from the poor form that saw them add a spoon to the trophy cabinet in 2007. The Orgazmos put together a respectable score of 1819 points - which was enough to wallop the Pav's to the tune of 300 points! So disgusted was coach Coach Steve with his team that he immediately embarked on a campaign to change the club name and bury the stigma associated with the Pavlovas forever. Alas, that request comes just a couple of weeks late. Regardless, proposing a name that was based on the objective of a Ben Cousins witch hunt probably tells you everything you need to know about the Pav's strategy! Happy Birthday Denno.

Nothing brings about a dose of confidence than playing the Buddhas in your season opener, and this year's was no different for the Ballbaggers. They were as impressive as the Buddhas were hopeless - the margin of victory approaching 500 points. While for the Buddhas it is MO, the Ballbaggers have had a lean stretch since they played off for a premiership in 2004, and Coach Cakey must have high hopes for his team in 2008. The Ballbaggers have made so many changes in the last couple of years they are more like the Ship of Theseus, but perhaps it is just a case of shuffling the deck until you get a combination that works?

The Death picked up where they left off last year, repeating their 2007 Preliminary final defeat of the Gazz in style. The Death, led by Dean Cox (158), were too good for the Gazz, who did themselves no favours by asking the impossible from Ben Johnson and Shane Crawford. It was not all good news for Coach Davo - losing two players to long term injuries in round 1 is not an attrition rate that can be sustained.

The Ruckmen were voted by the BMRWFC as the team most likely to defy their recurrent jan-itis and win the flag in 2008. This so intimidated the Stickmen, that Coach Steve was bluffed into a schoolboy error and named Byron Schammer twice - an error which cost him 156 points, entirely negating the impressive showing of Clinton Young. Error or not, the Ruckmen were always going to be too good, as they scored a comfortable 1913 in securing the victory.

The Tooty Men proved that their precipitous collapse to a spoon playoff last year was an anomaly, by defeating the Farmers in their round 1 match up. Frank was darker than Chris

Knights after the loss, barely capable of keeping grip on his shears. Coach Tim was obviously delighted with the win, prompting an uncharacteristic show of gloating. Time will tell if Tim can carry it off like the big game talker Flanagan.

Just when you think the Buddhas and the Pavlovas have secured tenure over futility, the Trucks come in and gazump them. Trev's youth policy is well known, but unfortunately for him, all his youngsters appear to have colic, as he put together a measly total of just 1434 points - the round's lowest score. Coach Riemann, perhaps ruminating the unfortunate turn of events that led from his excellent proposal of a name change - "Finn's Giants", to the one he ended up with - "The Giant McFools", was a little off his game, but still did enough to beat the Trucks.

Another team with a changed name - the Tasman Devils, had the unfortunate honour of lining up against the the rampaging Fever in Round 1. They scored over 1900 points, which would have been good enough to beat 12 teams this week - but not the Fever, who racked up 2177 despite going in one player short. It was an impressive and ominous performance by the Fever, who were led by the usual suspects - Cornes X 2, Corey , Mitchell... in fact Dan had 11 players who scored over 100 points. His full back line of Kane Cornes, Chad Kornes and Joel Corey would look fairly comfortable as the midfield in any AFL side!