

AZAFI GRAND FINAL – May 9, 2009

KINGSNAKES vs. DEVILS

MATCH REPORT

Chandler, Arizona – This weekend marked the end of the 9th season of Metro Footy in Arizona. The AZAFI Grand Final is one of the biggest sporting events on the Arizona sports calendar, slightly ahead of the Phoenix Open Golf, Arizona Cardinals NFL home games, Phoenix Suns NBA playoff games and possibly a MLB Diamondbacks game if they are playing a really good team (i.e. Yankees or Red Sox). Driving up to the McQueen Park Stadium you could feel the tension in the air; Goosebumps came out as the nervous energy built up. For some players this was their first chance at playing in a major sporting final, for others (like Laki) it was probably their one and only chance to experience greatness.

The Kingsnakes came into the game as 17 point favorites and had their full squad out for the game. The Devils were missing their leading scorer Mike “Big Country” Spielman and no one even remembers what Joe Sauer even looks like it has been so long since he has been to a game but the match would mark the first time all season that both teams played without a borrowed player. The game was also a first as both teams came into the Grand Final after losing their previous games (both to the Mighty Tombstone Marshals). The Devils, the early season favorites had lost their last 3 games and the Kingsnakes their last match. Which team would finish the season on a winning note? Before the kick off the Devils looked like more organized. Team Captain Brad “Chops” Palumbo had they boys warming up as a unit and much strategy was discussed. This was highlighted by Eric “Moose” Nichols running solo around the field before the game and doing multiple sets of push-ups at each end of the ground (not sure what was going on with Moose?). On the other hand the Kingsnakes looked like they were at a Saturday picnic. Players showed up late, they were disorganized and they talked more about what they were up to the night before than game tactics. After seeing this, the spread dropped to Kingsnakes being favored by only 13.

In hot conditions (105F/41C) the teams began the game at a brisk pace. The Kingsnakes look like contenders early on with Kieran “Fitzzy” Fitzpatrick kicking an early goal. Fitzzy’s leads were strong and often and it was only poor kicking down the middle that hurt his chances for more. The Devils responded quickly into the wind with Jared “Sneaky” Jones pulling one back. This served as a wake-up call for the Kingsnakes who promptly jumped into action. They won the ball in the middle through team captain Chad “Tank” Martin and Matt “Not Evil Anymore” Sovereign and bombarded their forward line with scud missile like punts. Fitzzy had a field day and ran his defender Moose Nichols around like a slow dog on a leash and kicked 3 more goals taking his tally to the quarter to 4. Jon “Sweets” Martinez pinched one as well. While it looked like it could be a whitewash early, Sneaky Jones picked up his second goal for the Devils and Mark “Please revamp our website” Stoeker hustled well to kick his first. Both teams were accurate in front of goal with only a behind each and at the end of the first quarter the Kingsnakes led 31-19.

At the start of the second the Kingsnakes looked to try to lock up the game early. Callum "Ridiculous Tan Lines" Ford appeared to be wilting away under the sun but people pointed out that he is actually that skinny in all weather conditions. Despite having Simon "B'Day Boy" Daniels all over him like a rash, Ford played strong and kicked two goals for the quarter. Jack "I like Janelle a lot" Watty came alive and helped his team with some quick and handy play. The ball was fed up the ground in the general direction of the forward line and Sweets Martinez must have improved his eyesight with the injury he took to his head earlier in the season as he was running around like Ryan Luto in the hair care product section of the supermarket grabbing everything in sight. Sweets kicked true and notched 3 goals on his belt for the quarter. For the Devils the Irish Duo (no they are not a band) of Jason "Gaelic" Ryan and Denis "Pudge" Kelly looked to energize their team like a Guinness on a Saturday night. Ryan scored a goal and it was widely accepted on the sidelines that Pudge might have been the toughest guy pound for pound on the ground that day. This was proven when he was absolutely crunched by Chad in a tackle and he got up 1 second later and played on like only a mosquito had bitten him. Sneaky Jones scored his third goal of the game and Ronan "Trojan Warrior" Barrutt scored his first of the game. It was noted that Ronan actually started to play better when his girlfriend (Miss Czechoslovakia) made it to the game. For the Devils their middle played tough in the game led by Tim "Spewey" Montagna and Lucas "MIA" Hanover. While they played tough they fell further behind and at the half-time break the score was Kingsnakes 63-39.

The heat played a toll in the third quarter with the most active people on the field being the runners bringing out water. There were only 3 goals kicked total in the quarter between both teams and while you could say this was good defense, it was more like a bunch of out-of-shape "has beens" and "never was beens" running on empty. For the Devils, their youthful roster started to help out with Daniel "UofA" Rogan leading the charge and Alec "Westy" West playing tough. Ronan the Trojan Warrior scored his second but the Devils biggest mistake was leaving Sweets Martinez free on the opposition and he had as much fun as Troy at a weightlifting convention and romped away with 2 more goals. The crowd wondered how good Sweets could be if he actually trained (side note, Sweets has not been at training since April 2008!). Chris "Pun" Gamache and Sean "Trooper" Carney were solid of the bench in only their first full year of playing footy. In the backline Rob "M16" Jellison was playing tough wearing his bonnet and Josh "Tough" Ashley was kicking, scratching and clawing his way to thwarting the Devils players as they attempted to mark. John "Nitro" Scott was solid as a rock on the field and the Kingsnakes looked like a well oiled machine with a lot of rust and some missing parts. At the end of the third the Kingsnakes had jumped to a 31 point lead, 79-48.

The crowd was sensing a whitewash and several hundred left early but the few thousand who remained were lucky enough to see some of the best footy of the day. Chops, like a true general marshaled his troops and had them all believing that they could win the game (not sure how he did it, probably used Jedi mind control tricks). Little Timmy Montagna decided to step up and play even bigger than he had been and ran around like a mouse in a house of cheese. His darting runs and not so accurate kicks inspired the Devils to play hard. Trojan Ronan played Robin to Tim's Batman and scored a goal in the 4th. Tim came up strong and scored 3 himself in the quarter. Moose shook of his leash and played tough defense and much to the delight of the Devil's fans didn't allow Fitzy to add to his goal tally. The Devils

were hurt by the fact that Sneaky Jones had to leave the field and played no part of the 4th due to his injured knee. The Kingsnakes started to get worried as their 31 point lead was slowly chiseled away until it was down to just 13 points. Team Captain Chad Martin was not going to let this happen and he carried his team on his large and muscular back for the 4th quarter and topped it off by scoring his team's only goal of the period. As the final siren sounded the Kingsnakes had led start to finish to win the Grand Final 87-74. The Devils could hold their weary heads high as many times it looked like they would be blown out but like that pesky ex-girlfriend they just wouldn't go away they kept coming back for more. With a healthy Jared Jones and Mike Spielman showing up who knows what might have happened but the Kingsnakes did what they had to do but winning the team's first ever Grand Final.

Best on ground for the Kingsnakes: Martinez, Fitzpatrick, and Martin

Best on Ground for the Devils: Montagna, Barrutt, Stoeker

Game Notes:

- Tim Montanga was named "Most Valuable Player" for the final despite playing on the losing side. This is the third time this has happened in the AZAFL.
- Jon Martinez set an AZAFL Grand Final record by scoring 6 goals in the game. That was more than the 5 he had scored during the entire season.
- Fitzy's 4 goals in the 1st quarter was also a record for most goals in a quarter of a Grand Final game.
- The game was hot, 105F/41C but this was not the hottest game played in Arizona. That happened in the 2004 season where a Hawks games was played when it was 115F or 46C.
- After kicking 4 behinds and two balls out of bounds on the full in his first AZAFL game, Callum Ford bounced back to finish the season off as the League's Leading Goal kicker for the 2009 season!

Mr. Watty Update: Your son left his best for last. He had a great game and not only had to play defense on Tim, he also helped his team through his on field play. This was Jack's last kick of the footy for the next few months as he is too much of a sally to come to San Diego with the team this weekend. Please let Mrs. Watty know that Jack's manners were gain superb at the after game function.