

## **MCDFNL Round 7 Preview**

*Round 7 had a change of date to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July due to COVID Lockdown during Round 7*

### **Lexton v Harcourt**

In what is expected to be potentially the game of the round as the two highly ranked teams on the ladder finally meet at Lexton on Saturday.

There is a strong rivalry that has been built up between the two clubs since Lexton joined the MCDNFL back in 2011.

Of the eleven games played Lexton has won eight games to Harcourt's three and the closest margin was when Lexton defeated Harcourt by a point in 2013. Harcourt won by just two points in 2017, but Lexton defeated Harcourt by twenty-one points in their most recent game of 2019.

A lot of time has passed since that last game and Harcourt are sitting on top of the ladder undefeated with a massive percentage of 621% as they average twenty-three goals a game. In comparison, Lexton has a percentage of 265% and averaging eighteen goals a game.

Mathematically Harcourt is tipped to win the encounter, but mathematics means nothing in a contest between two top teams who will do anything to remain in the top four.

Lexton have the advantage of the home ground and will hope that this will help them to bounce back from last week's defeat by Natte-Bealiba.

Harcourt's defence is the best in the League only allowing twenty-three goals to be scored against them and they will provide a tough challenge for Lexton's key goal kickers Lachlan Murray (36), Dean Kelly (19) and Pat McGuigan (15).

Before last week's game against Natte-Bealiba, Lexton's defence had only allowed twenty-six goals through in their six games, but the Swans kicked fifteen goals, so the Tigers defence will have to tighten up to challenge Zac Denahy with thirty-two goals and Benny Leech with thirty goals.

The Lions have many other avenues to goal, and this could be the key in who gets the victory in the game of the round.

### **Avoca v Maryborough Rovers**

Avoca and Rovers meet at the Avoca Public Park on Saturday as Rovers look for their second victory of the season, while Avoca are looking for their second win in succession.

The Bulldogs are coming off a particularly good win over Newstead, and it will be difficult to see them lower their colours to Rovers who have been struggling to field a competitive team on a weekly basis.

Rovers were well beaten by Carisbrook last week, and it is difficult to see them bounce back from such a massive defeat against the sixth placed Bulldogs.

Alex Mahony is consistently amongst their better players for Rovers, while former Bulldogs Ruckman and now Rover's coach Brendon Hedger certainly leads by example on the playing arena and will be striving for success on Saturday.

Avoca were hit badly with injuries earlier this season which resulted in them bleeding some younger players this season and the inclusion of Ostarcevic, Cudmore, Baldock, Beavis, Wardlaw and Robinson, has seen them gain the experience required for the future to come. The youngsters are holding their own and mixed with experience players such as Henningsen, Hunt and Duke, Avoca is starting to gel into a competitive unit.

Avoca and Rovers have had some good battles over the years, with the Bulldogs winning their last three games quite comfortably and it is expected that they will continue their recent dominance again this Saturday.

### **Natte-Bealiba v Dunolly**

Natte-Bealiba host Dunolly on Saturday and a one-sided game is expected as the Swans have made a late challenge for the top eight with the return of several experienced players.

Jarrod Bateson, Emmett Smith, and Jordi Cossar are three players that returned recently which has strengthened the Swans, while Coach Zeik Johnston was best on ground in last week's shock victory over Lexton.

The Swans showed signs the week before when they pushed undefeated Harcourt all the way, so it does not auger well for the winless Eagles this week.

The Eagles were soundly beaten by the other undefeated team in Trentham last week managing to only score two goals for the game and allowing the Saints thirty-seven goals on the scoreboard.

It has been a long season for the Eagles as they have only kicked a total of 5 goals in the last two games, but they continue to give their all under duress.

Tyson Cope leads the way for the Eagles as he gives his all in the ruck and was again their best player against the Saints and he will provide a tough contest for the Swans Lachlan Cameron who is one of the league's best ruckmen.

The Swans should be too strong in all areas as they continue their rise up the ladder.

### **Carisbrook v Royal Park**

Royal Park looks like it could be in big trouble this weekend, with the side heading out to Carisbrook.

The Tigers haven't won a game since round five and were very happy to skip their meeting with Carisbrook, originally scheduled for early June, due to the lockdown and head straight into games with lower ranked Talbot and Navarre. While initially these meetings were thought to be winnable for the Tiges, the side has been whittled down by injury and have subsequently dropped both results, making this weekend's task at the Redback web a near impossible one.

Brook head in off the back of back-to-back triple-figure wins over bottom of the ladder sides Dunolly and Maryborough Rovers and are unlikely to show any mercy.

Brook leading goal kicker Anthony Zelencich, who currently leads the league with 67 in eight games will be a major target for the Bushy defenders, particularly as he is a former Tiger himself, last playing with Park in 2017.

Zak Rinaldi, who kicked nine snags in just his second game back on Saturday and Tim Rinaldi who kicked six will also be one to watch with Nick Wright, Harry Butler, Aaron Taggart and Lachlan Edwards just a handful of players who have executed some great footy over the past couple of rounds.

In an attempt to shut down Brook's goals onslaught, Park will likely ask Tom Quick, James Sutherland, Linden Anderson and Luke Relouw to step up to the plate in what is going to be a tough day in defence, while Karson Guareschi and Jacob Rollason will hope to get their own totals on the board.

A big win for Brook would mark victory number eight for the side this year and keep its third-place ranking on the ladder safe and sound, while Park is still grappling with a drop from eighth to 11<sup>th</sup> courtesy of the weekend's loss to Navarre, but the good news is it can't drop any further regardless of what awaits this weekend.

### **Newstead v Talbot**

The battle between Newstead and Talbot this weekend should be a cracker, with both sides eager to get a win to keep their spirit alive.

Despite a massive fourth-quarter effort, the Steaders fell to Avoca on Saturday in a shock loss which has dropped the side from sixth to seventh place on the ladder, while Talbot has remained in ninth place after the week off due to the bye.

Neither side has had stable footing this year with Newstead boasting a 3-5 win-loss ratio and Talbot displaying a 2-5.

Both teams have played off against four of the same opponents, Maldon, Carisbrook, Trentham and Avoca, with Talbot coming out better off against Avoca, defeating them by 30 points, and also Carisbrook and Maldon losing by 41 and 67 less points respectively than Newstead.

The Roos did fare better against the undefeated Saints than the Hawks however with a 63-point difference compared to a whopping 112-point loss putting this weekend's result up in the air.

Talbot will look to the likes of Brad Dunbar, Anthony Taylor, coach Daniel Romeo, Nathan and Matt Bond to keep the chance of a win alive, with goals likely to come from Damien Kennedy, Zac Graham or Matt Bond who currently leads the side with an average of two goals a game.

Mitch Stevens, Ben Pedretti, Matt Lorenz, Oscar Lynzaat and Joel Smith have been outstanding for the Steaders this season, setting them up as key contenders to challenge the Hawks with all eyes on Brad Richardson (18 goals) and Tyler Richards (10) up forward.

A close game is predicted at Newstead reserve with the home side looking in with a big chance however the Hawks will be fresh as daisies after the break and eager to take their second win in a row.

### **Trentham v Navarre**

Trentham will play for win number eight this weekend, hosting Navarre in what should be a pretty straight-forward contest.

While the Grasshoppers will still be jumping for joy off the back of their unexpected 23-point defeat of Royal Park at the weekend, reality will likely come crashing down at the Saints' domain this weekend.

Trentham now has seven straight wins in their pocket, having beaten Avoca, Natte Bealiba, Maldon, Carisbrook, Newstead, Talbot and Dunolly so far this season and sit second from the top of the ladder, behind Harcourt due to percentage.

In comparison, Navarre has won just three of eight games, defeating Natte, Park and Avoca, however losing to Harcourt, Lexton, Maldon, Carisbrook and Newstead, several teams which the Saints have rolled over.

To win this weekend would be a massive feat, but the Hoppers will give it a crack especially since they'll be travelling two hours to pull on the boots.

Josh Fowkes had a cracking game for Navarre at the weekend, with he, Bill Parry who kicked six, Jayden Fowkes, Louis Hannett and Leetyn McKenzie taking top votes, a grouping the side will need this weekend if they're to have any hope.

For the Saints, league medallist Joel Cowan is having another blinder of a year and is sure to make things hard as will Alister Ferrier, Ben Cass, Dylan Holden, Riley Matricardi and leading goalkickers Jake Keogh, who has kicked 28 goals in seven games and Cooper Webber-Mirkin who has kicked 23 in four.

The Saints head in off the back of their biggest score of the year over the bottom-of-the-ladder Eagles and will hope to get a big total up again this weekend for a percentage boost, while Navarre will hope to challenge one of the competition's very best.