**Match Report – Kawana v Noosa Lions 2 August**

*By Alasdair Scott*

In a closely contested clash with finals implications, Noosa Lions battled to a vital 1-0 away victory over fourth-placed Kawana on Saturday afternoon, thanks to a second-half header from the ever-industrious and versatile Harry Neal.

With Kawana keen to cement their top-four standing, the match was always going to be a tight affair — and it delivered exactly that. Chances were few and far between in a physical contest marked by dogged defending, heavy challenges, and fleeting moments of attacking promise.

Noosa struggled to find rhythm early on against a resolute Kawana backline, who gave little away. A 20th-minute break saw Oli Williams deliver a dangerous ball into the box, but Neal — playing in the number 10 role — fired over the bar under pressure. Neal’s bustling and high-energy performance epitomised Noosa’s desire to play the game on the front foot, but despite the team’s work rate and pace, the visitors could not create any clear-cut chances against a determined home team defence.

As the clock ticked towards the break, Noosa finally carved out two clear chances. Both fell to Sam Boldy, but his efforts were denied by the Kawana goalkeeper, ensuring the sides went into the sheds level at 0-0.

Noosa came out firing after the restart. Jack Williams almost made an immediate impact with a chance from the right, and two minutes later, Oli Williams won a free kick and then sent a looping header goalwards — easily collected, but a signal of intent.

The turning point came in the 49th minute when Kawana were reduced to ten men. Despite the disadvantage, the hosts dug in defensively and made Noosa work for every inch. Eventually, pressure told. In the 57th minute, Jack Williams whipped in a pinpoint cross and Neal, timing his leap perfectly, nodded home into the bottom corner. It was a deserved reward for the midfielder, who covered every blade of grass.

With the numerical advantage, Noosa started to find more space, but chances remained half-chances at best. Oli Williams saw an effort deflected for a corner, and further substitutions — including Myles Dresher, Max Adey and Matt Thomson — aimed to inject fresh impetus.

Despite their control in midfield and build-up play, Noosa couldn’t find a way through to put the game to bed. In the end, Neal’s header proved decisive. It was a gritty and hard-earned three points — not a performance to dazzle, but one that underlines Noosa’s capacity to grind out results when it matters most. Similarly, the Under 23’s were made to work hard for their 2-1 win, Jake Mjask bagging a double, the second being a fine finish to a great team move.

Congratulations to the Noosa Under 15 (1) and Noosa Under 18 Blue teams who both won their games and consequently their respective Premierships – an outstanding effort by both sides with two rounds still to play.

**Next Match: Buderim vs Noosa Lions – Saturday, 9 August**
📍 *At Ballinger Park, Buderim | U23s 4:00pm | Men’s 6:00pm*