

**CLUBS OF THE
SOUTH
AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL
FOOTBALL
LEAGUE**

by

JOHN DEVANEY

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For Ratlegs

Introduction

The South Australian National Football League was originally known as the South Australian Football Association. It is the oldest Australian football competition in the world, established in 1877 a few weeks prior to its Victorian counterpart. For much of its history, the SANFL vied with the Western Australian Football League as the nation's second strongest and most important senior grade football competition. However, the last three decades have seen its status diminish considerably. In 1982 the VFL, with its own self-preservation and continued viability in mind, forced one of its member clubs, South Melbourne, to relocate to Sydney, thereby potentially gaining access to the most lucrative market in Australia. The league expanded further in 1987 with the addition of clubs based in Brisbane and Perth, while in 1991 the SANFL, after bravely trying to maintain its profile and significance for several seasons, finally accepted the inevitable and applied for and was granted a license to field an Adelaide-based team, the Crows, in a competition which had been misleadingly renamed the Australian Football League the previous year.

In 2014 the AFL comprises eighteen clubs, the majority of which remain based in Victoria. Of the eight non-Victorian clubs, one has its roots in Victoria, while another brazenly persists in claiming it has. In doing this, its principle aims are to attract a Melbourne-based following from former supporters of the defunct Fitzroy Football Club, and to benefit from the preferential status which the league continues to accord, in numerous ways, to members of the original VFL.

A Melbourne-centric quasi national competition might well benefit the game in Victoria in some measure, but there can be no doubt that football has suffered greatly in the other states which for over a century were also considered to constitute football's heartland: South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Half a century ago virtually all of South Australia's elite footballers played out their entire careers in the SANFL, and public interest in the game was

significantly higher than it has since become. Nowadays, the SANFL is essentially just a feeder competition for the AFL, a state of affairs which will be reinforced in 2014 when the Adelaide Football Club starts fielding a reserves team in the league. This development constitutes a major watershed for a competition which for many decades enjoyed elite status, and it is with this in mind that I have decided to record and, ignoring the unfashionable nature of the word, celebrate the uniquely colourful, exciting and distinctive story of one of the most historically important sporting competitions in Australia. In doing so, I have chosen to use the various clubs which comprise, and have comprised, the league as my lenses. Each of these clubs provide a unique slant on the SANFL's birth, growth, development and decline, whilst collectively, I hope, creating a single, largely coherent, highly evocative picture of an institution which may have seen its day, but without which top level football as it currently comports itself could not possibly have existed.

John Devaney
May 2014

ADELAIDE - 19th Century

Formed: 1860; disbanded 1873; reformed 1876; merged with Kensington 1881; disbanded 1882; reformed and merged with North Park 1885; assimilated the original West Adelaide Football Club 1888; assimilated North Adelaide/Hotham 1889
Disbanded: 1893

Colours: Black, red and white

Senior Grade Premierships: 1886 (1 total)

SAFA Top Goalkickers: J.Young (14) 1877; R.Stephens (17) 1886 (2 total)

Early football in Adelaide was played under a variety of guises, with conformity not being reached until the establishment of the South Australian Football Association in 1877, when a close approximation to the rules then in force in Melbourne was adopted. A major driving force behind the formation of the Association was Nowell Twopenny, captain of the Adelaide Football Club, the oldest in South Australia.

By the time of the inception of the SAFA, the Adelaide Football Club already had a long, and somewhat chequered, history. Formed in 1860, it initially only played matches internally, typically between groups of players sharing a particular characteristic, achievement or place of residence. On 12 August 1861, for example:

The adjourned match between the Past and Present Collegians and other members of the Club was continued on the North Parklands on Saturday afternoon. A very cold wind was blowing during the whole of the time, and accompanied by several sharp showers of rain. Undaunted by the threatening aspect of the weather, the spectators, consisting chiefly of ladies and horsemen, assembled in great force, and the ladies, with true courage, kept guard of the prizes they had presented in spite of the cold and

pitiless rain. Upwards of 40 players arrived. Play commenced shortly after 2 o'clock, Mr. O'Halloran being captain of the College side, and Mr. Cooper captain of their opponents. With hearty goodwill the players went to work; in about an hour the College party gained a goal. Elated with their success they were rewarded with another goal after about two hours exertion. The ladies distributed the prizes, some of which were very elegant, to the following players: Messrs.T.O'Halloran, G.O'Halloran, N.Knox, T.Illury, Richardson, H.Gouge, Taylor, W.Uren, Morphett, T.Hosier, G.Schlinke, S.Lawrence, H.Giles, Soward, Bonnin, Payne, Jacob, Wooldridge, Addison, N.O'Halloran, Hallett, Chambers, McEllister and Bastin.

The 'spills' were more frequent than on other occasions, in consequence of the slippery conditions of the ground, and at the conclusion of the game nearly every player bore traces of having had a fall. No mishap, however, worth mentioning occurred, except that in the course of the afternoon a horse, belonging to one of the spectators, bolted across the playground. Master Gwynne immediately rode in pursuit, but just as he reached him one of the players ran between the horses causing them to fall and throwing Master Gwynne; however, nobody was hurt.¹

The first ever game between Adelaide and a rival club (Modbury) was recorded as taking place in 1862, but no details of the match survive. It is known, however, that the two teams met again the following year, on a strip of land near the Modbury Hotel, when "the game was kept up with the greatest spirit and good feeling, and so equally were the sides matched that not a goal was obtained".²

Most of Adelaide's matches were played according to the club's own set of rules, which initially at least were the most popular of all.³ However, when during the early 1870s

¹ *South Australian Football: the Past and the Present* by C.K. Knuckey, page 9.

² *ibid.*, page 11.

³ Many of Adelaide's players were former pupils of St Peter's College, where a form of football similar to that in vogue at the Harrow Public School in England was played. The Harrow game was - and is - based on dribbling the ball along the ground, but it also contains elements central to the Australian

another set of rules, those of the Kensington club, began to gain more widespread acceptance, Adelaide faced something of a crisis, and indeed in 1873 the club felt compelled to disband. Sadly, this volatility was something that would plague the club throughout its short history.

Having reformed in 1876, Adelaide was afforded something of a lifeline the following year by the establishment of the SAFA. On the field at least the club was competitive, not to mention highly regarded for its open, and visually appealing style of play. In the SAFA's inaugural season, Adelaide came third, and was the competition's highest scoring team, albeit that it seems to have played more games than many of its opponents:

SAFA Premiership Ladder - Season 1877						
	P	W	L	D	Goals	
					For	Aq.
South Adelaide	13	10	1	2	23	1
Victoria Club	14	10	1	3	30	5
Adelaide	16	10	3	3	31	13
Port Adelaide	15	9	4	2	23	13
Woodville	16	5	9	2	14	18
South Park	17	5	10	2	16	21
Kensington	15	3	10	2	12	36
Bankers	15	0	15	0	4	31

In subsequent seasons, Adelaide's level of performance declined significantly. In 1880 it finished seventh and last, and the following season, owing to a lack of players, it entered into a merger with Kensington, which had also been struggling. This 'marriage of convenience' lasted just one year, and was not even particularly convenient, as the club came bottom. Adelaide then went into mothballs for three seasons before reforming, merging with Adelaide and Suburban Football Association club North Park, and joining a somewhat atrophied, four team SAFA competition in 1885.

game, such as marking (known as 'yards'), the absence of crossbars on the goals, tackling, but no pushing in the back, and the requirement that goals be kicked, not forced. Adelaide's rules are likely to have been based fairly closely on the Harrow/St Peter's model.

Initially, this new incarnation of the Adelaide Football Club seemed to find things every bit as tough as its predecessor, but after succumbing to the 1885 wooden spoon it suddenly sprang to life the following year to claim a highly popular premiership. Captained by J.D.Stephens, and with other fine players in A.M.Pettinger (vice-captain), elusive goalsneak Richard Stephens, F.W.Warren, R.Lewis and W.Reid it re-kindled the club's previous reputation for fast, open, attacking football.

In 1887 this reputation was enhanced when it thrashed the visiting VFA premier, Carlton, by an unprecedented margin of 9 goals to 3, with Richard Stephens kicking 6 goals as well as hitting the post. The following season, Adelaide was one of four SAFA teams chosen to engage the visiting British rugby team in a match played according to Australian rules. By the time of the encounter, which took place on Thursday 12 July at the Adelaide Oval, the tourists had already played ten such matches, and were becoming quite proficient. Two days earlier they had scored the finest victory of their tour when they downed the powerful Port Adelaide combination by a goal, and up to half time in this particular match it looked possible that Adelaide might become their second significant victims. At the long break the British side led by a goal, 3.1 to 2.9 (behinds not counting, of course), but in the third quarter the red and blacks got on top, and the final bell saw them comfortably home by 3 goals, 6.13 to 3.5.

Unfortunately, this proved to be just about the last significant triumph of the club's existence. Over the course of the next couple of seasons, sloppy and erratic management led to the dispersal of many of the key members of the team and by the early 1890s the club was little better than a chopping block for more talented opponents. After three successive wooden spoons from 1891-3 the plug was pulled one last time, and the name 'Adelaide' disappeared from the senior football spectrum for the better part of a century. During its brief and at times shambolic history, however, the original Adelaide Football Club had played a major role in

helping establishing the Australian code of football in South Australia.

ADELAIDE

Club Address: P.O. Box 10, West Lakes 5021, South Australia

Website: <http://19thman.com.au/>

Home Ground: Adelaide Oval. However, all SANFL fixtures are played on the home grounds of opposing clubs.

Formed: 1990

Colours: White, blue, gold and red

Emblem: Crows

Senior Grade SANFL Premierships: Nil

Magarey Medallists: Nil

League Top Goalkickers: Nil

Adelaide has fielded a team in the Australian Football League since 1991, obtaining back to back premierships in 1997 and 1998. In recent seasons support for the club has declined, and in 2013 it attracted the lowest ever average home attendances in its history.⁴ Prior to 2014, players on the club's list who were fit but failed to gain selection at AFL level were divided among, and eligible to be selected by, the SANFL's nine member clubs. However, from 2014 the Crows will be fielding their own team in the SANFL comprising AFL players not required at senior grade level,

⁴ 33,703. The record average home crowd for a season was 46,128 in 1993, the season the Crows qualified for the AFL finals for the first time.

supplemented by a number of other players who will only be eligible to play in the local competition.

BANKERS

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

Established early in April 1877, the Bankers Football Club was one of the founder members a few weeks later of the SAFA. Unfortunately, the club appears to have been signally lacking in playing talent, and proved to be significantly weaker than all of the other teams. It lost every one of the 15 matches it contested in 1877, and managed to score just 4 goals while conceding 31. Moreover, it would probably be fair to suggest that the club was not treated particularly seriously, either by the other clubs in the Association, or by the public at large. At the end of the 1877 season 'Marlborough', writing in 'The Advertiser', strongly implied that the Bankers club was something of an embarrassment, and expressed the hope "that no efforts will be made to establish it next season".⁵ The writer got his wish as, shortly afterwards, Bankers disbanded.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Club Address: P.O. Box 10, Elizabeth 5112, South Australia

Website: www.cdffc.com.au

⁵ 'The South Australian Register' (supplement), 3/10/1877, page 2.

Home Ground: Playford Alive Oval (originally known as Elizabeth Oval)

Formed: 1959 (B grade); 1964 (seniors) Colours: Royal blue, red and white Emblem: Bulldogs

Colours: Royal blue, red and white

Emblem: Bulldogs

Senior Grade Premierships: 2000-1, 2003-4-5, 2007-8-9-10 (9 total)

Other Premierships: Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy - 2001- 2-3-4, 2007 (5 total)

Magarey Medallists: Gary Window 1965; John Duckworth 1979; John Platten 1984; Gilbert McAdam 1989; Paul Thomas 2004, Brad Symes 2012 (6 total)

All Australians: Peter Jonas 1979; John Platten 1985 (2 total)

League Top Goalkickers: Enrico Vidovich (62) 1968; Rudi Mandemaker (93) 1989; Daniel Schell (74) 2004 & (81) 2005; Justin Hardy (58) 2012 (5 total)

Highest Score: 35.23 (233) vs. West Torrens 4.11 (35) at Elizabeth Oval in round 4 1988

Most Games: 308 by Peter Vivian from 1969 to 1985

Record Home Attendance: 16,029 in round 18 1984: Port Adelaide 15.13 (103); Central District 12.9 (81)

Record Finals Attendance: 46,132 for 1996 grand final at Football Park: Port Adelaide 11.14 (80); Central District 6.8 (44)

During the years immediately following the second world war the population of Australia increased rapidly as a result of the government's policy of actively encouraging immigration from Europe. In South Australia, the city of Elizabeth was specifically earmarked during the 1950s

to cope with this mass influx. Situated on the Adelaide Plain some thirty kilometres north of Adelaide the city quickly came to boast a cosmopolitan mix which in some ways prefigured that to be found in the country as a whole some quarter of a century later.

Australian football was totally new to these immigrants, and in most cases their immediate reaction, on being exposed to the game, was negative. The SANFL's acceptance in 1958 of an entry bid from a team based in Elizabeth might therefore be viewed as courageous in the extreme. The bid was made by the Gawler Football Association which had been in existence since the 1880s. Indeed, a Gawler Football Club was an honorary founder member of the South Australian Football Association (precursor of the SANFL) in 1877, and maintained a sporadic involvement in that competition until 1890. It was resolved at a meeting of the GFA in March 1958 that its new club should be known as the Central District Football Club (not, as people to this day persist in terming it, Central Districts Football Club), a name which emphasised its links with the whole area rather than just a single town. The chosen colours of red, white and blue were said to have been derived from a cigarette card depicting an English soccer team which a delegate to the meeting was carrying, and this, coupled with the chosen nickname of 'Bulldogs', served to reinforce the club's perceived, albeit extremely loose, British connection. Another important early link was with VFL club Footscray which shared both emblem and colours and made a donation to Centrals of thirty long sleeved jumpers and thirty pairs of socks.

At the same time as Central District's application to join the SANFL was accepted a similar application from the Woodville Football Club was also approved. Both clubs were required to spend a probationary period of five years, commencing in 1959, in the seconds competition, before their full admission to league ranks. Centrals' record during this probationary phase was not distinguished, with the team collecting wooden spoons in 1959, '60 and '62, with a third place in 1961 proving their best effort. The Bulldogs finished

in eighth position (out of ten teams) in 1963 but the year did have one memorable feature in that exciting half forward Gary Window landed the seconds Magarey Medal.

The team's under achievement at seconds level arguably did not augur well for the future, but with the appointment of experienced West Adelaide star Ken Eustice as captain coach and the recruitment of a number of well-credentialed players from interstate there was a fair amount of optimism in the air at Elizabeth on the eve of the club's inaugural league campaign in 1964. Sadly, however, the season developed into something of a nightmare, with Eustice being prevented by clearance problems from taking his place in the side until round 7, and the team failing to record a single victory in any of its 20 league fixtures.

The club's home ground at Goodman Road, Elizabeth was not ready for use until the 12th round, when Glenelg had the honour of providing the opposition. The Tigers won easily, 11.21 (87) to 7.4 (46), but the carnival style atmosphere and large attendance gave promise of better times ahead.

Centrals' leading recruit for 1965 was highly rated South Fremantle centre half forward Tom Grijusich who gave the team something vital which it had hitherto lacked: a focal point ahead of centre. With a season of league football under its belts the team gradually began to show improvement. Round 2 brought a first ever senior win, albeit only against fellow newcomers Woodville, but even in their losses the team were proving much more resilient and competitive. In round 11 at Richmond Oval Central District finally broke through for a win against an established SANFL club, and what is more, they won impressively by 38 points, kicking a club record score of 17.19 (121) to West Adelaide's 11.17 (83).

After that, the floodgates opened, with the Bulldogs securing 6 further wins during their 9 remaining matches for an 8-12 win/ loss record and seventh position on the premiership ladder. Even more excitingly, Gary Window's career reached another pinnacle when he won the league Magarey Medal to go with the seconds Medal won two years earlier. The general consensus was that the club had now

genuinely arrived, a view which was still being expounded well into the following season:

Centrals have gone past the 'give them a bit of encouragement' stage. They need none.

*Rival teams do. Centrals have developed into a combination which no other side can even start thinking about lightly. They have height, strength, speed and will-to-win, and if ever a side looked a final four prospect they do.*⁶

In hindsight, such optimism seems almost ludicrously misplaced. In successive seasons from 1966 to 1969 the Bulldogs finished ninth, ninth, eighth and eighth, only once (in 1967) managing more than 4 victories for the season. Quite simply, apart from Eustice, Grljusich, Window and one or two others the team lacked quality players, and when confronted by the likes of Sturt and Port Adelaide they sometimes appeared totally out of their depth. Eustice and Grljusich, in fact, both departed Elizabeth at the end of the 1967 season, Eustice to re-join his former coach Neil Kerley who was now at the helm at Glenelg, and Grljusich to return to South Fremantle in the WANFL. Window meanwhile missed the whole of the 1967 and 1968 seasons while coaching East Gambier in the South Australian country, and after his return to league football in 1969 only rarely recaptured his Magarey Medal form.

Central District during these years was, in essence, a team of battlers, possessed of nuisance value and little more. Nevertheless, club spirit was developing all the time, and in a number of intangible ways the foundations were being laid for a dramatic upswing in on field fortunes.

In 1966 the club's Colts (precursor of the Under 17s) side won a premiership, the club's first at any level. Another triumph of sorts came a year later when full back Terry Phillips won a televised competition to find the champion kick

⁶ 'The South Australian Football Budget', volume 40, number 9, 14 May 1966, page 12.

in South Australia, and then went on to surprise everyone by defeating vaunted interstate opposition from Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania to claim the national title.

In 1970 the Bulldogs experienced a similar end to the season as five years earlier, including at one stage a club record 4 wins in succession. A win/loss record of 7-13 gave them seventh place on the premiership ladder, and as in 1965 there was talk of Centrals having 'arrived'. This time, though, it was to be no false dawn.

Despite a slow start in 1971 it gradually became clear that the Bulldogs were developing into an accomplished side. Once again, the team really hit its straps during the run home and, with 12 wins and 9 defeats in the home and away matches, managed its first winning return in eight seasons in the SANFL. Much more importantly, however, the team had made the finals for the first time by displacing Norwood from fourth spot late in the season, thereby booking a first semi final date with reigning premiers, Sturt. In the eyes of most observers Centrals had done enough for the time being simply by reaching the finals. The aim now should be to consolidate on that achievement by going a step or two further in 1972. The Bulldogs, however, had other ideas, despite being confronted first up by a side which was bidding to equal Port Adelaide's SANFL record of six consecutive premierships. What is more, Centrals had never once managed to defeat Sturt in 16 previous meetings, and indeed had never even got to within 3 goals of the Double Blues.

The match was tight for three quarters with the Bulldogs enduring everything the Double Blues could throw at them to go into the lemon time break just 5 points adrift. Then, with the breeze at their backs, and the majority of the 36,400 crowd roaring them on, they quickly gained the initiative in the final term thanks largely to a dominant on ball unit to run out comfortable victors by 27 points, 13.13 (91) to 8.16 (64). That on ball unit included rovers Barry Norsworthy and Robin Mulholland, the latter an Irish convert from Gaelic football, Western Australian ruck rovers Phil Haughan and Tony Casserly, and 206 cm ruckman Dean Farnham, one of the tallest players ever to play senior Australian football.

Elsewhere in the team there were sterling contributions from Lyndon Andrews, Peter Nicks, Lyle Skinner and Peter Vivian.



Tony Casserly

With 5 goals during the final quarter Mulholland won unanimous acclaim as best player afield, and the press and media were equally unanimous in declaring this Central District's finest ever moment. Almost a quarter of a century later, recent premierships triumphs notwithstanding, it would still be hard to think of more than a handful of finer ones.

The Bulldogs of 1972 showed still further improvement to manage 14 wins out of 21 during the home and away season before comprehensively accounting for Norwood in the first semi. Now coached by Casserly, Centrals once again met their match in Port Adelaide on preliminary final day, but not before giving the Magpies a real fright. Leading by 21 points at three quarter time the Bulldogs looked to have a grand final berth in their grasp, but in a heart stopping final stanza their inexperience under pressure proved their undoing as the Magpies clawed their way to a 7

point triumph. Consecutive third places remained Central District's best ever sequence of finishes for over two decades.

From 1973 to 1975 the Bulldogs were a middle of the road combination capable of upsetting the best but equally capable of disappointing when pitted against the league's strugglers. Gary Window replaced Casserly as coach in 1976, but when the Bulldogs plummeted to their first wooden spoon since 1964 a season later he gave way to Daryl Hicks. Hicks, a wingman in each of Sturt's five successive grand final wins from 1966 to 1970 had inherited his former mentor Jack Oatey's ideals on the game, and it was not long before an improvement was shown. In 1978 the Bulldogs missed the finals but in '79 they swept all before them in securing a first ever minor premiership, generating unprecedented finals fever in the northern suburbs as a consequence. However, in a pattern that was to become all too familiar they were then unceremoniously bundled out of the flag race with finals losses in successive weeks against Port Adelaide.

Vietnam war veteran John Duckworth became Centrals' second Magarey Medallist in 1979 after a barnstorming debut season with the Dogs. Duckworth was the latest in a series of outstanding West Australians to represent the club, and although he only played a total of 42 games over two seasons at Elizabeth his impact on the club as well as on the game in South Australia in general went well beyond this.

At the close of the 1970s optimism within the club was so high that Hicks was moved to declare the 1980s 'the Decade of the Dogs'. Such pronouncements rarely help, and in hindsight it is possible to see how it may have imposed unnecessary additional pressure on the players, whilst also providing opposition sides with an extra incentive to do well against the 'big heads'.

Under Kevin 'Cowboy' Neale, a former VFL star with St Kilda, and later under well-travelled South Australian football identity Neil Kerley, the Bulldogs contested four finals series during the 1980s without winning a single game. Not surprisingly therefore, by the close of the decade a definite feeling of resignation had set in. In the 1989 qualifying final

against Port Adelaide, for example, the Bulldogs played outstanding football in the first half to establish an in truth not entirely flattering 13 point lead only for their challenge to evaporate completely after the interval when they could only add 2.6 to Port's 17.14 to go under by 85 points.



Peter Nicks

Most of the highlights of the '80s were individual in nature. The 1981 season saw the debut of a long haired rover wearing the number 44 guernsey who served immediate notice of what was to come by immediately earning best afield honours. John Patrick Platten was the first Elizabeth born player to represent the Bulldogs, and over the forty plus years of their involvement it is doubtful if there has been a more effective or highly celebrated one. In 107 games with Centrals Platten booted 259 goals and was winner of the Norm Russell Medal for club best and fairest in both 1984 and 1985. In addition, he won the 1984 Magarey Medal with a record 66 votes (both field umpires bestowing separate sets of 3-2-1 votes at the time) and was a regular South Australian representative in interstate matches, gaining All Australian

selection in 1985. During his time with the Bulldogs Platten was the focus of an ongoing clearance wrangle between VFL heavyweights Carlton and Hawthorn, a battle which the Hawks eventually won. During his ten season career with Hawthorn 'the Rat' went on to become one of the highest profile players in the game.

In 1989 a fourth Central District player was awarded a Magarey Medal in Gilbert McAdam. A quick, highly skilled on baller or wingman, McAdam played 73 games for the Dogs before following the by then well-worn path to Victoria in 1991 to join St Kilda. McAdam's victory in the Magarey Medal was particularly fitting as he was the first indigenous Australian player to be so honoured, and over the years Elizabeth Oval has been home to probably more aboriginal players than any other ground in South Australia.

'King' Kerley's reign as coach ended after the 1990 season with Centrals having finished a disappointing seventh. His successor, Alan Stewart, was a former player with the club, albeit mainly at seconds level, who had experienced success as coach of both Centrals Under 17s and the South Australian Teal Cup side. Stewart's first season as coach of the Bulldogs coincided with the formation of the Adelaide Crows, a development which contributed significantly to the SANFL's transition from being the 'shop window' of the state's football talent to little more than a breeding ground for the AFL. The fact that Stewart's background involved nurturing and developing youthful talent perhaps made him an ideal choice as coach, and certainly his results would appear to have borne this out.

That said, improvement was not immediate, the Bulldogs finishing some way off the pace in each of Stewart's first two seasons in charge. In 1993, however, the team was good enough to reach the finals for the first time since 1989, and, despite going down to Norwood in the elimination final, there appeared to be good reason for optimism over the future.

Off the field things were not looking quite so rosy. A 1993 operating loss of more than \$120,000 meant that there was no money available for recruitment prior to the start of the

1994 season, but the Bulldogs took this in their stride and it soon became clear that young players like Rick MacGowan, Tim Cook, John Abbott and Michael Wakelin had matured sufficiently to provide that extra impetus necessary to transform the side into genuine premiership contenders. With a 5-3 win/loss record after the first complete round of matches Centrals did enough to qualify to face ladder leader Woodville-West Torrens in the final of the SANFL's re-vamped night competition, the Foundation Cup. (In 1994, for the first time, the Foundation Cup's qualifying rounds were deemed to coincide with the first nine rounds of the official league programme, the two leading sides after that time playing off for the Cup.) In a battle of defences played in near perfect conditions the Bulldogs went down by 14 points, 2.7 (19) to 4.9 (33), but were far from disgraced. It was Centrals' first grand final of any kind, and, it goes without saying, whetted the appetite for more.

Four months later the Bulldogs faced perennial finalist Port Adelaide in the qualifying final having finished the home and away rounds in third place with 13 wins from 22 games. Prior to the match, Alan Stewart backed his charges to do well:

*"I have confidence and I rely on the players being very focused in what they have to do. I believe we have to set a standard and let the opposition worry about us. That means you are backing your 20 against their 20. When it comes down to it, our players know - and have experienced - that when they put in a disciplined, honest, team effort to the best of their abilities, they can beat any side in the competition."*⁷

In the event, the Bulldogs and Magpies staged one of the all-time classic SANFL finals matches, the Magpies eventually emerging victorious by 15 points after the teams had been forced into playing extra time for the first ever occasion in a SANFL final.

⁷ 'The South Australian Football Budget', volume 69, number 26, 10 September 1994, page 13.

The Bulldogs showed they had learnt from the experience a week later in the first semi final when they held off a fast finishing Norwood to clinch their first finals victory since 1972. However, in a preliminary final re-match with Port Adelaide the bubble was well and truly burst to the tune of 90 points, and the Bulldogs had once again, as on three previous occasions, failed to advance to a grand final.

Central District was the outstanding side in the SANFL for most of the 1995 season, winning the minor premiership⁸ for only the second ever time, and surviving a 2 point second semi final loss against Port Adelaide to make it through to the grand final. For the first time since the formation of the Adelaide Crows the match was a sell out with 45,000 spectators at the ground being joined by over a quarter of a million who watched it 'live' on television. Sadly for the Bulldogs, the occasion and Port Adelaide's finals acumen proved too much for them to handle, and the result was a disappointing 48 point loss. With a young, vibrant and highly committed group of young footballers at his disposal, however, coach Alan Stewart had good reason to feel optimistic about the future. "We have to learn the lesson of (the 1995 grand final) performance and store it away. We have to work hard at it, like we did in last year's finals, to get another opportunity to win enough games in the minor round and play finals footy. Hopefully next year we can do a better job."⁹

Stewart's replacement as coach was Steve Wright, a former VFL player with South Melbourne/ Sydney and a dual premiership coach with Clarence in the TFL. Under Wright the Bulldogs again won the minor premiership¹⁰ and this time, after a torrid encounter played in extremely windy conditions,

⁸ The Bulldogs also received the Foundation Cup, which was now awarded to the SANFL minor premiers, making this technically the club's first senior grade premiership.

⁹ Quoted in 'Football Plus', volume 1, number 36, 4 October 1995, page 13.

¹⁰ En route to the minor premiership the Bulldogs met and defeated Port Adelaide on three occasions, the last of which, at Elizabeth Oval in round 20, saw them 31 points down at three quarter time before storming back to claim a stirring 10 point victory.

emerged victorious against old nemesis Port Adelaide in the second semi to take the easy route to the grand final.

Centrals were 6/10-on favourites to win the 1996 premiership after grand final opponents Port Adelaide emerged bruised, battered and bloodied from a last gasp 2 point win over Norwood in the preliminary final. However, just as in 1995 the Bulldogs failed to match the Magpies' physicality and intensity and they went under by 36 points. Victorious Port coach Stephen Williams paid the Bulldogs the compliment of acknowledging that they were the closest side to the Magpies in terms of style but it would be extremely surprising if anyone at Elizabeth derived any consolation from this.

The Central District hierarchy were doubtless acutely conscious of the fact that, in 1996, their club was the pre-eminent force in the SANFL for all bar the last 120 minutes of the season. Achieving dominance in that vital two hour period is the final, and probably the biggest, leap which a club ever has to make. After two consecutive grand final losses, and with the complexion of the SANFL set to change with the admission of a second Adelaide-based club to the AFL, the Bulldogs had a perfect opportunity in 1997 to make that leap, but unfortunately this proved easier said than done.

True, they qualified for the finals with a fair degree of comfort, but a 17 point qualification final loss to Port Adelaide saw them start off on the wrong foot. The following week in the first semi final, North Adelaide were comfortably eliminated, but Norwood in the preliminary final proved too strong, and the Bulldogs' season was over.

The most eagerly anticipated event of the 1998 season was the return to Elizabeth Oval of the club's favourite son, John Platten. Sadly, however, Platten struggled for most of the year with a knee injury, and his appearances in the seniors were limited. The side itself also struggled, eventually scraping into the finals with just 9 wins - the lowest total by a finals qualifier since 1975 - before capitulating by 61 points to eventual premier Port Adelaide.

Things deteriorated even further in 1999 when the club's five season sequence of appearances in the major

round came to an end, although it would probably be fair to observe that this was more a result of inconsistency than any inherent lack of talent.

Astute recruiting over the summer months was to bear spectacular fruit in the 2000 season as the Bulldogs finally vanquished their premiership hoodoo in decisive, if not exactly spectacular, fashion. Among the new names to bolster the club's ranks were Danny Stevens from the Kangaroos, and James and Chris Gowans from St. Kilda. An additional bonus was the return of Daniel Healy - the 1999 Gardiner Medallist for fairest and best in the AFL reserves competition - also from St. Kilda. It took them a few rounds to find their feet but once they did it became clear that the Bulldogs were going to prove extremely difficult to beat in 2000. Finals qualification in second spot with a 14- 6 record ultimately proved the perfect perch from which to launch a premiership assault. A 22.11 (143) to 10.10 (70) annihilation of Port Adelaide in the qualifying final got the finals campaign underway in exhilarating style - indeed, it represented arguably the Bulldogs' best display of the season - but thereafter it became something of a grind. Minor premiers Woodville-West Torrens succumbed by 18 points in the second semi, but the contention of many observers was that the Eagles would be much stronger next time round (credence to this point of view being provided by the fact that, having had the bye at the end of the minor round, they had not fronted up for a fortnight, and were therefore likely to be 'under done').

The Eagles duly got their second crack at Centrals after a hard fought preliminary final defeat of Sturt and opinion in Adelaide was almost evenly divided as to where the 2000 flag would eventually end up. A disappointing crowd of just 34,819 - the lowest at an SANFL grand final since 1947 - turned up at Football Park on a wet September Sunday afternoon knowing that, one way or another, they would witness history in the making. On the one hand an Eagles win would give that club a clean sweep of premierships in all four grades, an achievement that not even the redoubtable Port Adelaide had ever managed, while a victory to Central District

would see the red, white and blue colours adorning the top of the West End Brewery chimney for the first time ever.

From the start it was clear that, even by grand final standards, this was going to be a hard, slogging affair, with 'scientific' football at a premium. After a goalless first quarter the Bulldogs, having enjoyed the benefits of a two or three goal breeze, led narrowly 0.5 to 0.3. According to many observers this represented a moral victory to the Eagles who, with the breeze at their backs, would kick away during the second term. However, such a view ignored the ferocious determination with which the Central District players, to a man, were approaching the game. Such an approach rendered incidentals like wind advantage irrelevant, and over the remaining three quarters the Bulldogs systematically proved this by adding 8.8 to 5.6 to secure a memorable victory by 22 points. James Gowans won the Jack Oatey Medal for best afield with brother Chris not far behind in terms of his overall contribution. Others to play well included Graham, Macgowan, Healy, Geister and Dew.

Twelve months later it was almost a case of déjà vu as Centrals and the Eagles clashed again on grand final day in near identical weather conditions. The only difference was that Centrals were by this stage an even more assured and well balanced outfit than a year earlier, and victory was achieved with correspondingly greater comfort, 10.11 (71) to 4.8 (32). The Jack Oatey Medallist on this occasion was Rick Macgowan, with the Gowans brothers again prominent along with Hicks, Slade, Geister, Healy and Guerra.

For most of the 2002 season it appeared that all the Bulldogs would need to do would be to turn up at Football Park on grand final day in order to secure a third successive pennant. After completing the minor round with only 2 defeats they enjoyed a week's rest at the outset of the finals before comfortably booking a place in the premierships decider with a 9.14 (68) to 8.6 (54) second semi final defeat of Sturt. A fortnight later against the same opposition Centrals were widely tipped to win again but the Double Blues, showing great desperation and commitment, overturned the odds in spectacular fashion. The early loss of Damian Hicks, who

sustained a rib injury after a clash with Barnaby French, undoubtedly disrupted Centrals' forward set-up, but this alone was not enough to account for the Bulldogs' capitulation.

Twelve months later and if anyone out Centrals way remembered the side's 47 point mauling at the hands of Sturt in 2002 they were not admitting to it. On Sunday 5 October 2003 the Bulldogs gave a highly disciplined and at times remorseless exhibition of modern team footy in overcoming sentimental favourites West Adelaide in a one-sided but entertaining grand final. The Gowans twins, Chris, who won the Jack Oatey Medal, and James, were both in splendid touch, as were ruckmen Paul Scoullar and Damien Arnold, whose efforts in nullifying West's Ben Marsh, a former AFL premiership player with Adelaide, were crucial in setting up the win. 'Advertiser' sports writer Doug Robertson felt that Central's victory marked "the evolution of a golden Dogs' dynasty",¹¹ recalling Daryl Hicks' 'Decade of the Dogs' prognostication of more than two decades earlier which, it seems, was not so much misplaced as mistimed.

In 2004 the Bulldogs reached a new pinnacle of excellence. After winning the minor premiership yet again they survived a scare in the second semi final against the Eagles to edge into their fifth straight grand final courtesy of a 2 point win. When the Eagles duly qualified for the grand final themselves, most people expected another close, hotly contested game, but under Roy Laird¹² Centrals had repeatedly proved capable of lifting their level of performance to new heights. On Sunday 3 October 2004, they did so in the most resounding sense imaginable, making the Eagles look completely out of their depth in the process. The Bulldogs' final tally of 23.15 (153) was the highest grand final score since 1969, while their eventual winning margin of 125 points was by some measure the biggest ever, not just in a grand final, but in any SANFL finals match whatsoever.

¹¹ 'The Advertiser', 6 October 2003.

¹² After steering the Centrals reserves team to the 2002 flag, Laird took over the senior coaching role the following year.

Centrals also emulated Port Adelaide and Norwood in securing the elusive 'trifecta' of premiership, Magarey Medallist (Paul Thomas), and leading goalkicker (Daniel Schell) in the same season. Best players for the Bulldogs in an awesome all round team display included Nathan Steinberner (Jack Oatey Medal), Marco Bello, Daniel Schell (6 goals), Daniel Healy and Stuart Cochrane. The only sour note was struck by the dismal crowd of just 24,207 who elected to show up on what was a perfect day for spectators.

The 2005 season saw Centrals struggle early, only to move ominously into form once the finals loomed. In the end, a 15-5 record was good enough to procure a fifth successive minor premiership, and thereafter the Bulldogs performed with consummate skill, aggression and purpose to overcome Port Adelaide Magpies by 45 points in the second semi final, and the Eagles by 28 points in the grand final, thereby securing a third consecutive flag, and their fifth in total. The Jack Oatey Medal for the best player afield went to Luke McCabe.

In 2006, the Bulldogs looked to have put a somewhat stuttering minor round performance behind them when they comfortably overcame North Adelaide and the Eagles in successive finals to qualify for their seventh premiership play-off in a row. However, on grand final day they were comprehensively outplayed to the tune of 76 points by a ferociously competitive Eagles combination. If there was a consolation, it was that there were only 25,130 spectators at AAMI stadium to witness their humiliation, affording further sad evidence that, through no fault of its own, the SANFL had in a few short years been irreversibly transformed from a major player on the Australian football stage to an incidental cameo of comparatively negligible importance and interest.

Just as they had done after the Sturt debacle of 2002, the Bulldogs bounced back from their 2006 humiliation at the hands of the Eagles to capture the 2007 premiership in emphatic fashion. Comfortably top of the ladder after the minor round with an 18-2 record, they cruised to their sixth flag on the strength of convincing wins over North Adelaide in both the second semi final (by 20 points) and the grand final (by 65 points).

In almost forty years of League competition Central District Football Club has boasted its share of champion players, with names such as Platten, Eustice, Duckworth, Window, McAdam, Grljusich, Casserly, Farnham and Haughan being as noteworthy as almost any in the game over that period. Although it was not until the early years of the twenty-first century that the club could truly be said to have 'arrived' as a consistently viable force in the competition, once it did arrive it gave the distinct impression that it was not remotely interested in the short term haul; Centrals now possessed, to put it rather imply, dynastic aspirations. The message to other SANFL clubs was emphatically clear - beware, the Bulldogs had battled long and hard to acquire their current pre-eminence, and it would take something quite exceptional on the part of their regular adversaries to bring them back down to earth.

Although there can be little doubt that many of Centrals' opponents upped the ante over the course of the ensuing three seasons none of them managed to do so to telling effect. In the 2008 grand final the Bulldogs met, and overcame, Glenelg by 6 goals. Another comfortable premiership triumph followed in 2009 as Sturt succumbed on grand final day by a margin of 38 points, and a hard fought victory by a single straight kick over Norwood in the 2010 flag decider completed a club record four successive senior grade premierships in succession. The 2011 season saw the Bulldogs contesting their twelfth senior grade grand final in a row, a league record, but somewhat surprisingly they sustained a 3 point loss to Woodville-West Torrens. Nevertheless, in establishing an unprecedented dominance of the competition throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century Central District emphatically confirmed its status as one of the all-time great combinations in SANFL history.

In 2012 and 2013 Centrals embarked on what might reasonably be described as a rebuilding phase, with many of the major contributors to the club's decade of success having retired. The Bulldogs were still sufficiently strong to qualify for the finals in both years, however, and one suspects that it will

not be all that long before the blue, red and white colours again adorn the West End brewery chimney.

Bulldogs Bite Back Part One

SANFL Round 13 1967: Central District vs. West Torrens

Since the turn of the present century, the Central District Football Club has enjoyed unequalled success in the SANFL, but this position was not arrived at easily. Over the years, the club and its supporters suffered many disappointments and false dawns, eliciting considerable derision and disdain in the process. Indeed, something that very few people today probably recall or realise is that, four decades ago, the club actually went within a hairsbreadth of being stillborn.



Ian Hayward of John Martins presents Central District president Harry Bowey with a perpetual trophy intended for presentation to each season's senior club champion.

In 1959 the SANFL made the momentous and highly controversial decision to expand its competition from eight clubs to ten via the admission of Central District, representing Adelaide's rapidly growing northern suburbs, and Woodville. The two Cinderella clubs would initially be required to serve an indeterminate probationary period in the seconds competition, beginning in 1960, but by 1962 it was clear that many of the key figures in the SANFL hierarchy were beginning to doubt the wisdom of the proposed expansion. Consequently, in a bid to clear the air and focus minds, the League set up a special three man committee, chaired by its vice-chairman, Don Brebner, to examine the issue in detail, and to make formal recommendations to the clubs as to how the competition ought to be structured from 1964 onwards. In brief, the committee's recommendations were:

1. That the senior League competition should continue to comprise just 8 clubs

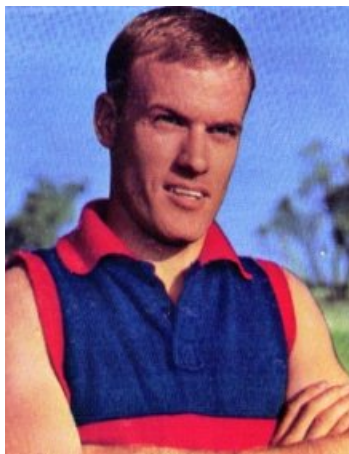
2. That the projected future population of the northern suburbs clearly warranted a League presence, and therefore South Adelaide should be required to re-locate to Elizabeth

3. That no more teams representing areas west of Adelaide should be admitted to the competition

4. That preparatory work should be undertaken to facilitate the expansion of the League competition to 10 clubs in about 1975 by means of the admission of teams based in Noarlunga and Tea Tree Gully

When these proposals were submitted to the eight club delegates for approval, voting was split 4-4, with Port Adelaide, Sturt, West Adelaide and West Torrens voting 'yay', and the other four club delegates 'nay'. The decision as to whether or not Central District and Woodville should be admitted to the League competition, or even continue to exist, was therefore placed squarely in the hands of League chairman, Tony Kenny, who had the casting vote. Seldom can such power over the entire future of the game in South Australia have been conferred on one individual, but

thankfully for future fans of the Bulldogs he made what history has shown to be a wise decision.¹³



Ken Eustice, Centrals' inaugural captain-coach.

Not that Centrals' problems were over - far from it. When the club was finally admitted to the senior SANFL competition in 1964 it was the equivalent of a lamb among wolves, and if adversity can be regarded as one of the essential building blocks of maturity and tradition, there was plenty of it to come during the side's early seasons, much of it ruthlessly dispensed by men wearing the black and white jumpers of South Australia's most famous club. In 1964, the Bulldogs met Port Adelaide twice, losing by 124 points at Alberton and 137 points at Elizabeth, and managing an aggregate score over the two games of just 6 goals 9. For inaugural Centrals captain-coach Ken Eustice, the Port Adelaide system represented something to which the fledgling club could do much worse than aspire.

Despite being a West Adelaide product, Eustice's own style of play bore many of the characteristics espoused by

¹³ 'The South Australian Football Yearbook 1963', pages 7-8.

Port Adelaide mentor Fos Williams, himself an avowed and ardent Eustice admirer, and it was largely because of Eustice's influence that Central District, in its early years, developed a style of play in which the old fashioned virtues of passion, aggression and determination often helped compensate for a basic lack of talent. That said, it would be wrong to suggest that Eustice saw football as a game for mindless thugs. In a coaching manual published in 1967 his key advice to young, aspiring footballers was, "Always keep your cool. Play with your head as well as your body. Try to play intelligently - but always play with determination".¹⁴

Unfortunately for Eustice, most of his charges at Centrals lacked the talent necessary to implement his philosophy, which meant that, to the objective onlooker, there was little apparent system to the Bulldogs' play, which seemingly revolved around the simple expedient of getting the ball and kicking it as far as possible in a goalwards direction in the often forlorn hope that a team mate down field would be successful in doing the same. My father, a Sturt supporter, frequently amused himself by referring to the Centrals style of play as "bush football", and indeed compared to the scientific, skill-oriented Double Blues approach of the day, he undoubtedly had a point.

My friend Charlie was a West Torrens supporter, which is the main reason that Saturday 15 July 1967 found me, an ardent Port Adelaide fan, at Elizabeth Oval for the meeting of home side Central District and the Eagles. Accompanying us was Charlie's granddad - 'Pops' - a jocular and, to my youthful perception, extraordinarily wizened man, with brown teeth and firm, unwavering opinions. Some of these opinions related to footy, and were characteristically expressed with adamant terseness, almost as if by rote.

"How do you think Centrals will go against Torrens at the weekend, Pops?"

"Ah, no hope Centrals, no hope." (Uttered machine gun style, almost as a single word, and rounded off with a half embarrassed, mirthless chuckle.)

¹⁴ Quoted in *The South Australian Football Record Yearbook 1968*, page 87.

"What about Sturt against South?"

"Ah, no worries Sturt, no worries." (The same knee-jerk, staccato certainty; the same mirthless laugh.)

Regardless of the opposition, Pops's answers never varied. Centrals was always "no hope", Sturt "no worries".

Mind you, in 1967 you did not have to be a football genius to make these kinds of assessments. The premiership ladder printed inside the 'SA Football Budget' for 15 July made the contemporary balance of power clear:

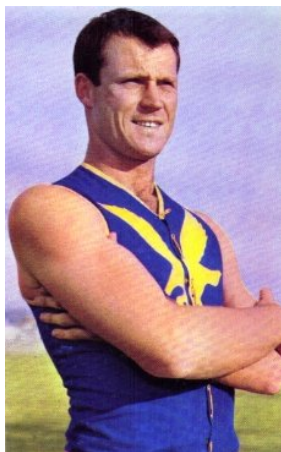
	Points					
	Won	Lost	For	Ag.	Pts	%
Sturt	11	1	1469	909	22	61.77
North Adelaide	10	2	1298	981	20	56.95
Port Adelaide	8	4	1089	886	16	55.13
Norwood	7	5	1234	1155	14	51.65
Glenelg	6	6	1206	1027	12	54.00
South Adelaide	5	7	1156	1162	10	49.87
West Adelaide	5	7	1128	1145	10	49.62
West Torrens	5	7	1045	1278	10	44.98
Central District	2	10	817	1391	4	37.00
Woodville	1	11	996	1504	2	39.84

However, what the ladder does not reveal is the recent trend of disastrous form that had seen West Torrens sustain five consecutive losses to tumble from third from top after seven rounds, to third from bottom prior to this match. Indeed, so poor had Torrens' recent displays been, that the Budget writer felt justified in suggesting that "All Centrals need is a return to top form from Tom Grljusich, to be reasonably confident of their third win for the season".¹⁵

Originally from South Fremantle, where he would return at the end of the season, Bulldogs vice-captain Grljusich was a strong marking, quick thinking, powerful key

¹⁵ 'SA Football Budget', 15/7/67, page 8.

position player who, along with Ken Eustice, formed the backbone of Centrals' woefully under-resourced and extremely inexperienced side.¹⁶ Other key players for the Bulldogs included Sonny Morey, an original member of the club's League team whose career would finally blossom after Eustice's replacement as Centrals coach, Dennis Jones, transformed him from a livewire but erratic wingman into the best rebounding back pocket in the state; former East Fremantle rover Keith Shorthill; promising ruckman Gary Smith; and long kicking full back Terry Phillips, who later in the year would beat off the challenges of players from Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania to win the inaugural 'Craven Filter Champion Kick of Australia' contest.



Geoff Kingston of West Torrens.

¹⁶ This is evidenced by the fact that, in the 1967 Magarey Medal count, the Bulldogs polled an aggregate of 42 votes, with Eustice (15) and Grljusich (11) netting more than half of that total between them. Grljusich, who grew up in Perth idolising all-time great Graham 'Polly' Farmer, shared to some extent his hero's uncanny ability to open up the play with prodigious, perfectly directed hand passes to unmarked team mates.

On paper, West Torrens had a much stronger line-up than Centrals, even allowing for the absence through injury of two key players in the shape of centre half forward Geoff Kingston and ruckman Chris Butler. In Lindsay Head, the Eagles had one of the most skilful players in the League, indeed in Australia, while centre half back Glen Pill, utility Fred Bills, rover David Lee, half forward Peter Phillipou, and full back Tracy Braidwood were all players of the top rank. Also appearing for the Eagles in this match was a man by the name of Wayne Jackson, who would later enjoy much greater notoriety as a football administrator. In the view of Pat Hall, "there is no doubt that Torrens have the ability to extend any side in the competition, if they decide to put their best foot forward".¹⁷ This ability had been amply demonstrated during the first meeting between Torrens and Centrals in 1967 when, in round 4 at Thebarton, the Eagles had enjoyed an effortless 59 point success, but since then the players' confidence had declined appreciably. At season's end, second year coach Ron Ashby would become the inevitable scapegoat for the team's decline, making way for former Essendon and Victorian rover Johnny Birt.

In contrast to the old world charm of Thebarton, the verdant splendour of Adelaide, the almost palpable air of tradition at Alberton, or the ramshackle claustrophobia of Norwood, Elizabeth Oval in 1967 was a threadbare and uninviting place. Despite the fact that you were only some 24 kilometres from the heart of Adelaide, you almost got the feeling that you had 'gone bush' with, as suggested above, some of the football played by the home side only serving to reinforce the impression.

During the interval between the seconds game (won surprisingly by 9th placed Centrals against 2nd placed Torrens by 60 points), a brief ceremony took place out on the ground in which the General Manager of John Martins donated a perpetual best and fairest trophy to the Central District Football Club. At the time, such an event was a comparative novelty, with business and football enjoying at

¹⁷ 'Footy World', 19/7/67, page 3.

best a platonic friendship rather than the full-blown love affair that would all too rapidly develop.

After the two teams had engaged in a couple of warm up laps, and had their sprigs and fingernails inspected, Torrens captain Fred Bills won the toss and elected to kick to the southern end of the ground, which was favoured by a fairly stiff, four or five goal breeze.

1st Quarter

The Eagles were straight into attack from the opening bounce and, with the exception of a brief spell during the middle of the term, that was where they remained. The Bulldogs, however, defended with commendable determination, repeatedly forcing the play onto the eastern side of the ground from which, given that the wind was blowing from the north-west, kicking for goal was more problematical. That, at least, was certainly the Eagles' experience: as time-on commenced, they led by 7 points, 1.8 to 1.1, having squandered numerous scoring opportunities either by poor kicking or over elaboration. On at least two occasions, players marked within easy goal kicking range, but elected to play on, placing team mates under intense pressure with poor handballs, as a result of which the Centrals defenders were able to clear the danger.

Deep into time-on, the Bulldogs back line finally cracked, not once, but twice, allowing a somewhat relieved group of West Torrens players to head for the quarter time huddle 19 points to the good. Even so, on balance of play it ought to have been much more.

Up in the grandstand, where the three of us were sitting as a concession to Pop's advancing years, I munched cheerfully on the pie I had bought in preference to a Budget, and asked Charlie what letter Port was on the progress scoreboard. "D," he informed me, from which intelligence I was able to ascertain that the Magpies, like Torrens, had seemingly squandered scoring opportunities in the opening term against North at Prospect, as despite having managed 7 scoring shots to 3, they trailed by a point. Ah well, early days.

"What letters are South and Sturt?" I asked. "G and H," proffered Charlie, and then added. "Hey, Pops - Sturt's leading South by 4 points."

The old guy chuckled sagely, or was it wistfully? "Ah, no worries Sturt, no worries."

QUARTER TIME: West Torrens 3.8 (26); Central District 1.1 (7)

2nd Quarter

Central District's lack of experience and poor team discipline were glaringly exemplified for most of the second term. Despite enjoying the not inconsiderable wind advantage, Centrals failed to dominate to anything like the same extent that Torrens had in the opening quarter. Kicking long and hopefully only succeeds as a tactic if you have superior numbers at the fall of the ball, or else players who are capable of winning more than their share of one on one contests. With Braidwood, Jackson and Graham in superb touch on the Torrens back line, the Bulldogs were unable to concoct more than a handful of scoring opportunities, and although by the long break they had managed to reduce the margin to 11 points, there was nothing to suggest they were capable of overhauling their more poised and efficient opponents.

HALF TIME: West Torrens 4.9 (33); Central District 3.4 (22)

3rd Quarter

The third term was a virtual carbon copy of the first, with Torrens enjoying almost total territorial domination, but Centrals defending with considerable grit and effectiveness. A prolonged break in the play when Torrens forward John Staker was taken from the ground on a stretcher after sustaining a badly gashed leg threatened to undermine the Eagles' momentum, but with David Lee, Freddie Bills, John Graham and Lindsay Head in the thick of the action they maintained their ascendancy virtually all over the ground except in front of the big white sticks.

During the lemon time interval, Charlie and I jumped the fence and headed out onto the ground. While Charlie trotted over to the Eagles camp to listen to Ron Ashby's words of wisdom, I elected, for some obscure, unknowable reason, to eavesdrop on Eustice. It was a providential decision, giving rise to an experience that I can still recall quite vividly almost 40 years later, an experience rendered almost seminal in my recollection - no doubt disproportionately so - by the subsequent events of the final quarter.



Sonny Morey, pictured in action against Port Adelaide.

By no means the most formidable of physical specimens, Eustice nevertheless commanded rapt attention from every one of his players, not to mention the thirty or forty or so interested onlookers. It wasn't so much the substance of what Eustice was saying - indeed, other than assimilating a handful of expressions that my father later painfully convinced me ought never to form part of a well-behaved 11 year old's vocabulary, I remember little of what was actually said - it was more the expression on his face, and the sheer animal

ferocity with which the words were uttered. Quite why I should find such bald, unfettered emotion so inspiring is unclear, but the fact that I did so is undeniable. Indeed, had Eustice asked me to don a Centrals jumper and line up on Eagles champion Lindsay Head for the final term I have little doubt that I would have succeeded in comprehensively blanketing him, to the extent that he would probably have been dragged, leaving me to run riot during the closing minutes of the match with 3 or 4 match-winning goals.

OK, I exaggerate.... but seldom can so much invective, and so much saliva, have been so fervently and advantageously expended. Footy may well be the world's most majestic and spectacular sport, but underpinning and informing it is a primal energy that the conventions of civilised society for the most part emasculate or divert. Footy too, which inevitably reflects society to some extent, is not above such emasculation, but thankfully to date the essence of the game has remained untouched, although recent needless experimental tinkering with the scoring system, as essential an element in the fabric of the game as the shape of the ball or the concept of the handpass or the mark, perhaps prefigures a worrying stage in the sport's development. The more regimented and subject to measurement and control a sport becomes, the less capable it is of tapping into those elemental reaches of the human soul in which philosophy, science and theology alike inform us, fulfilment and self-realisation lie.

THREE QUARTER TIME: West Torrens 6.14 (50); Central District 3.4 (22)

4th Quarter

But back to Elizabeth Oval in 1967, and the to me incredible sight of a hitherto inept and uncoordinated Central District outfit raising both the tempo and the tenor of its performance to such an extent that, for the entirety of the last quarter, Torrens scarcely managed to get the ball ahead of centre, let alone trouble the scorers. It is a dreadful cliché, but no less true for that, that the Bulldog players

played like men possessed, always seeming to have more bodies at the fall of the ball than their opponents, and slowly but surely reducing the margin with what, at the time, seemed like predetermined certainty. With a couple of minutes to go, and scores deadlocked, Julian Swinstead, having marked within easy goal kicking range, kicked truly, and Centrals had finally captured the lead, so that Eustice's passionately fiery, if scarcely comprehensible, diatribe had born fruit. Indeed, during that tumultuous final term, no one took the sentiments uttered in the 'lemon time' huddle to heart more thoroughly and unquestioningly than the coach himself, whose 12 final quarter kicks gave him a match total of 35, and automatic selection - later endorsed by the umpires at Magarey Medal time - as best afield.

The Bulldogs' eventual 6 point win was one of only five achieved by the team all year, and like all the others (Woodville by 4 and 7 points, West Adelaide by 4 points and Norwood by 4 points) it was achieved both against the odds and against the grain, a victory not so much for talent as for passion and strength of will, two of the most essential contributors to success, not just in football, but in virtually any field you care to name.

"Port's lost," said Pops, with rather too much relish for my liking. He pointed at the scoreboard, where the attendant had just affixed the fateful numbers 'C 12.7 D 8.12'. I determinedly adopted a poker face, belying my inner angst. '19 points!' I quickly calculated. 'That's almost a massacre!'

Then came a moment I couldn't help but enjoy. 'G 8.25' the scoreboard informed us. Dreadful kicking, but..... Yes! There it was: 'H 9.8' - a win to South by 11 points. "Hey Pops, Sturt's lost," I helpfully announced, carefully if somewhat exaggeratedly adopting my most cherubic facial expression. His response, like so much else, is lost in the mists of time.

FINAL SCORE: Central District 8.8 (56); West Torrens 6.14 (50)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Central District	1.1	3.4	3.4	8.8	56
West Torrens	3.8	4.9	6.14	6.14	50

BEST - Centrals: Eustice, Shorthill, Hage, Stutley, Bentley
West Torrens: Braidwood, Graham, Jackson, Bills, Head, Lee

SCORERS - Centrals: Hage, Swinstead 2.0; Webber 1.2; Foley, Grljusich 1.1; Shorthill 1.0; Eustice 0.2; Bentley, Smith 0.1
West Torrens: Lee 2.2; Tucker 2.1; Staker 1.3; Shepherd 1.0; Head 0.3; Phillipou 0.2; Bills, Caldow 0.1; rushed 0.1

ATTENDANCE: 4,098 at Elizabeth Oval

Bulldogs Bite Back Part Two

SANFL Round 20 1996: Central District vs. Port Adelaide

The most obvious differences between Elizabeth Oval in 1996 and three decades earlier were the colours, with deep luxuriant greens replacing sun-scorched browns and yellows, creating an altogether more amenable, elegant and 'lived in' feel. Trees which in 1967 had been scrawny bushes tucked away behind the perimeter mounds now encircled and to a certain extent enfolded the arena, while the addition of several rows of terracing helped convey the impression that this was a football ground, not just an oval where football happened to be played.

The Central District journey since 1967 had been a long, arduous and still predominantly unfulfilling one, with many of the most frustrating and demoralising episodes occurring at the hands of the men from Alberton. It took the Bulldogs until 1971, which also happened to see the senior team qualify for the finals for the first time, finally to beat the Magpies. The game was at Elizabeth, and Centrals won by 5

goals, but when the teams met again when it really mattered on preliminary final day it was not the Bulldog fraternity who emerged smiling.

Port Adelaide extinguished Centrals' premiership aspirations in 1972 as well, after conceding the Bulldogs a 24 point lead late in the third term of the preliminary final, and a 21 point margin at the final change. At the end of the season it was observed in 'The SANFL Annual Report' that "the local support for the club is so strong that it seems it is destined to become one of the power bases of South Australian football".¹⁸ Nevertheless, it was to be seven long years before the club even tasted finals action again, let alone began to think in terms of empire building. That 1979 finals campaign was hardly calculated to generate optimism: after clinching their first ever minor premiership, the Bulldogs bowed out meekly in straight sets against Port Adelaide (inevitably) and South Adelaide.



The Bulldogs' 1996 coach, Steve Wright.

¹⁸ 'SANFL Annual Report Season 1972', page 4.

Despite this disappointment, or perhaps in an effort to counter it, Centrals coach Darryl Hicks bravely declared that the 1980s would be 'the Decade of the Dogs', a pronouncement that would become tantamount to a noose around the club's neck as it repeatedly promised to deliver greatness, before almost embarrassedly deciding, often at the eleventh hour, that it was more comfortable with mediocrity. The 1980s was a period of great and colourful players - Platten, Moore, Wilson, McAdam - messianic coaches - Hicks, Neale, Kerley - and a one hundred per cent failure rate in finals.

Nor were the '90s, at least initially, much better. When the Bulldogs qualified for the finals in 4th place in 1993 there was a palpable and wholehearted desire to get the finals monkey off their backs, but the side's performance against Norwood in the elimination final was no better than in any of its previous ten major round matches, all of which had also been lost.

After losing the 1994 qualifying final in extra time to Port Adelaide (the first SANFL final to be decided in this fashion), Alan Stewart's Bulldogs finally enjoyed that long forgotten finals winning feeling when they edged past Norwood by 4 points in the following week's 1st semi final. The elation, inevitably, was considerable, but it was also short-lived (or over-done?) In the preliminary final against Port, Centrals was blown away to the tune of 90 points.

Improvement continued in stages. In 1995, after more than three decades of trying, Central District finally made it through to a grand final, only to be confronted, almost inevitably, by the club's perennial *bête noire*, ominously festooned in black and white. Port Adelaide's 13.16 (94) to 6.10 (46) 1995 grand final win left deep scars, but sometimes healing can harden and reinforce, and in 1996 Centrals determinedly went about the job of rectifying matters, with the Magpies, now categorically cast in the role of 'Public Enemy Number One', feeling the overwhelming brunt of the club's newfound steely resolve. New coach Steve Wright, while making a point of keeping things low key and relaxed, and

making few overt changes to the style of play developed under Stewart, nevertheless brought with him a wealth of experience gleaned from 246 V/AFL games with South Melbourne/Sydney, and almost inevitably this trickled through to the players. "I'm fortunate to have inherited a side with a good game plan already in place and good players," Wright observed midway through the 1996 season. "We have some proven running guys, strong marking players and a cohesive defence. We're still lacking in some departments, but the players are aware of that."¹⁹



Centrals-Port action at Football Park during the 1980s, a disastrous decade for the Dogs.

¹⁹ 'SA Football Budget', 13-14/7/96, page 23.

Exactly what Wright thought the deficiencies were is unclear, but on the eve of the Bulldogs' round 20 clash with Port Adelaide things had, in general, proceeded swimmingly, with Centrals perched proudly atop the ladder having already inflicted a couple of demoralising defeats on their arch enemy.²⁰ With the prospect of the double chance in the finals looming, there seemed genuine grounds for optimism that 1996 might finally prove to be the season in which the Central District Football Club, an organisation of so much promise and so much thwarted ambition for so long, would take the hardest step in football, from also-ran to champion.

The Port Adelaide Football Club meanwhile had taken that ultimate step long before any of its hordes of supporters, and its even greater hordes of haters, had even been born. The oldest football club in South Australia, it was also far and away the most successful, eliciting in various measures pride, adulation, fear, envy and loathing. Its status as 'Public Enemy Number One' made it more or less equally detested whether you habitually watched your footy at Elizabeth Oval, or Norwood, Glenelg, Unley, Richmond, Woodville, Prospect or Noarlunga. If anything, the detestation had ballooned in recent years as a result of the circumstances surrounding the club's initially thwarted, but ultimately successful, bid to join the Australian Football League. Midway through the 1996 season Magpies coach John Cahill had relinquished his role in order to devote himself to preparing full time for the club's AFL debut the following year. Cahill's replacement at the helm of the Magpies was Stephen Williams, son of the legendary instigator of the club's incomparable post-war achievements, Fos Williams, who, along with his brother Mark, would go on to make a significant contribution to the Port Adelaide ethos and legacy.

The Magpies went into this round 20 clash in 4th position on the premiership ladder, having undergone a mid-season deterioration in form that would have been alarming had it not, in recent seasons, become almost habitual.

²⁰ Centrals won by 27 points in a low scoring game at Football Park in round 2, and by 21 points at Alberton in round 11.

Coming off the bye, its players were rested, and with the finals just a month away, could reasonably be expected to have put their mid-year malaise behind them.

Centrals too had endured something of a decline in form of late, with a scrappy 45 point round 18 win over the Eagles being sandwiched between losses against South Adelaide by 16 points in round 17, and Norwood by a heart-rending solitary point at Elizabeth in round 19. Nevertheless, the Bulldogs still topped the ladder, and a win against Port would go a long way towards making that position secure.

1st Quarter

Port Adelaide captain Tim Ginever, having won the toss, elects to kick to the northern end of Elizabeth Oval which is favoured by a two to three goal breeze. The weather is cool and overcast, with a distinct threat of rain in the air.

4 mins After more or less successfully withstanding Centrals' opening barrage, Port Adelaide finally manage to mount a meaningful foray into their attacking zone. With the ball bouncing loose in the left forward pocket, a swag of players converges, led by the Magpies' Brian Leys, who just manages to give off a handball to Tony Malakellis before being sent flying by Scott Stephens. Despite the heavy surrounding traffic, the former Geelong and Sydney rover manages to maneuver into space before snapping truly from less than 20 metres. **Port Adelaide 1.0; Central District 0.1**

6 mins David Brown, having marked deep in the left forward pocket for Port Adelaide, looks to be lining up a shot for goal, but his kick appears to hold up in the breeze, and comes back to earth near the left edge of the goal square where Scott Hodges, having used his body cleverly to make front position, takes a strong, one grab overhead mark. From less than 10 metres out, almost straight in front, the 1990 Magarey Medallist would almost have to fall over to miss. **Port Adelaide 2.0; Central District 0.1**

8 mins Tim Ginever squeezes a low kick forward from just outside to just inside the 50 metre area. After taking a surprisingly long and high bounce, the ball is thumped goalwards by Scott Hodges right into the path of the running Stephen Carter, who straightens up and fires home from less than 20 metres. **Port Adelaide 3.0; Central District 0.1**

19 mins After the Bulldogs' initial flourish it has been all Port Adelaide, with black and white jumpers seemingly outnumbering those of the opposition by a ratio of at least two to one, an apparent imbalance that repeatedly forces Centrals players to fumble, drop marks or miss the target with attempted passes. One such faux pas incurs the ultimate punishment when Roger Girdham, with nowhere to go near the centre of the ground, endeavours to handball back to James Saywell, only for Saywell's direct opponent Greg Anderson to lay a heavy tackle which knocks the ball loose. To Girdham's credit, he has realised his mistake immediately, and has dashed back to his team mate's aid, only for the loose ball to bounce off his shin right into the path of Brian Bienenke, who promptly off loads by hand to David Brown. Galloping on, Brown spots Stephen Carter leading into space near centre half forward, and his perfectly weighted left foot pass hangs in the air in front of that player, enabling him to run on and mark comfortably. Not by any means the longest kick in the Port Adelaide team Carter, who is just over 40 metres from goal, is probably at the limit of his range, and seems to look to play on. However, with no viable leads on offer, he goes back and, displaying admirable concentration and resolve, just manages to squeeze the ball inside the right upright for his second major of the game. **Port Adelaide 4.0; Central District 0.2**

22 mins Scott Lee, deep in the left back pocket adjacent to the behind post, takes a free kick for out of bounds on the full which he aims towards the boundary at half back left. A large pack of players forms, and Warren Tredrea, a 17 year old second-gamer for Port Adelaide, gets higher off the ground than anyone to thump the ball forward to Greg Anderson. The

former Essendon and Adelaide wingman is under intense pressure but manages to shoot out a handball to his former Crows team mate David Brown, who slips over but still has the presence of mind to spy Tim Ginever running past and find him with a deft hand pass. Running to within 30 metres of goal, Ginever seems to hesitate before electing to fire off an in truth somewhat flaccid looking left foot snap shot that nevertheless just has the legs to evade the goal line pack and sail through for the final score of the term.

QUARTER TIME: Port Adelaide 5.0 (30); Central District 0.2 (2)

2nd Quarter

1 min 30 secs Whatever Bulldogs coach Stevie Wright said to his players during the quarter time interval appears to have an immediate and pronounced effect as the Centrals players, to a man, appear sharper, faster and more desperate. Centrals it is who mount the first significant attack of the term as Saywell thumps a high kick forward from just behind the centre circle to just inside the 50 metre zone. Mark Conway and Darren Mead contest the mark, with Conway seeing of a stern challenge from the Magpie defender to hang on to a tenacious overhead mark. His left foot kick from just over 50 metres out elicits roars of approbation from the Bulldog faithful as it just eludes the flailing arms of the goal line pack for his team's first goal. **Port Adelaide 5.0; Central District 1.2**

4 mins Scott Lee's blind handball under pressure at half back left for Centrals puts team mate Brenton Daniel under the hammer, and Phil McGuinness promptly wraps him up to earn a free kick for holding the ball. Spotting Scott Hodges on a fast lead some 30 metres closer to goal, McGuinness fires off a pinpoint pass that the Port full forward leaps into with relish before executing a trademark clinical finish. Just as in the opening term, the Bulldogs have totally dominated the first four minutes, only to end up paying the ultimate penalty for a

momentary indiscretion. **Port Adelaide 6.0; Central District**
1.3



Tim Ginever - captain of Port.



Bulldogs skipper, Roger Girdham.

8 mins The Bulldogs sweep downfield in classic fashion from deep in their defensive zone as Scott Lee, in the right back pocket, finds Scott Stephens at centre half back, who has time to turn, spot Ricky MacGowan running into space near the centre circle, and find him with a casual, floating pass. Having taken the ball in front of his body, MacGowan releases Tim Cook, whose brisk grass burner of a pass hits Jarrod Cotton on the chest just inside 50. Cotton, who has recently modified his unique and somewhat indelicate kicking style, is on target with a towering left foot drop punt. **Port Adelaide 6.0; Central District 2.3**

10 mins Peter Green is taken high by Michael Wilson and, from the resultant free kick, 35 metres out on a 45 degree angle to the left of goal, he coolly splits the centre. Central District, playing a desperate, impassioned but highly intelligent brand of football of which Ken Eustice would be proud, are well and truly back in contention. **Port Adelaide 6.0; Central 3.3**

12 mins Having been awarded a free kick for holding the ball against Jarrod Cotton, David Brown is brought from half back left to just in front of left centre wing by the umpire after Cotton refuses to relinquish the ball. Brown's resultant kick reaches half forward left where Darryl Poole spoils Craig Potter from behind before pouncing on the loose ball and guiding a handball into the path of Tredrea. The young "champion of the future" (according to Magpies coach Stephen Williams) then releases Tim Ginever, who gallops in field a little to improve the angle, and then spears a low, left foot snap shot through the vacant goal square and across the line for his second major of the game. **Port Adelaide 7.0; Central District 3.3**

27 mins As the long threatened rain begins to fall, a ball up takes about 20 metres directly in front of the home team's goal. Port ruckman Shane Crothers, as he has done virtually all afternoon, wins the tap and attempts to direct the ball over the right back pocket boundary line. Ricky MacGowan,

however, intercepts the ball, and feeds Jim Wynd with a quick handball, whereupon the former Fitzroy rover deftly maneuvers into space and fires home with a right foot, around the corner snap. **Port Adelaide 7.2; Central District 4.6**

As the half time siren sounds a couple of minutes later, an all-in brawl briefly erupts in the lee of the main grandstand, as a result of which two players, Centrals' Tim Cook and Port's Paul Northeast, are reported.

HALF TIME: Port Adelaide 7.2 (44); Central District 4.6 (30)

3rd Quarter

In slippery conditions early in the third term, the Bulldogs squander two excellent opportunities to score, when first Mark Conway, and then Simon Luhrs, run in towards goal from less than twenty metres and somehow conspire to miss everything.

3 mins When Andrew Balkwill is afforded a similar opportunity, however, his concentration is almost palpable as he kicks through the ball in text book fashion to make absolutely sure. **Port Adelaide 7.2; Central District 5.6**

5 mins From a ball up deep in Port's right forward pocket, Darren Smith palms the ball to Darryl Poole who, despite being promptly gang-tackled, manages to squeeze out a two metre handball to Greg Anderson, who takes a couple of backward steps to give himself room before deftly steering home a left foot snap. **Port Adelaide 8.2; Central District 5.6**

7 mins A sloppy kick-in after a Centrals behind is marked right on 50 metres, directly in front of goal by Craig Potter. The ex-Brisbane player then kicks towards the right forward pocket, where Cotton and Wilson contest. The Port man uses his superior body strength to maneuver into front position, but Cotton, not to be out-done, takes a flying leap from behind, wedging his right knee into the crook of Wilson's neck, and

simultaneously soaring high and sending his opponent crashing, spread-eagled, to the ground. As Cotton himself returns to earth, the ball arrives, and the Bulldog half forward, almost as an afterthought, hugs it to his chest, whereupon, to hoots of derision from the Port fans, the umpire awards him a mark, and he nonchalantly steers the ball home. **Port Adelaide 8.2; Central District 6.7**

10 mins After about 90 seconds of intense pressure football deep in Centrals' forward line, during which players of both teams have been unable to procure clean possession, Port half back flanker Michael Wilson finally manages to pick the ball up and sink his boot into a hefty clearance, which travels from just outside the goal square almost to the centre of the ground. Unfortunately for Port, however, the only player in the vicinity is Stephen Schwerdt who, having marked easily, has time to measure his options before delivering a perfectly judged pass to Wilson's immediate opponent, Jarrod Cotton, who has run into space at centre half forward. Cotton kicks truly to bring the Bulldogs to within a point. **Port Adelaide 8.2; Central District 7.7**

12 mins A rushed behind to Centrals ties up the scores. **Port Adelaide 8.2; Central District 7.8**

16 mins Warren Tredrea, having marked strongly at half forward left, intelligently floats the ball into space in the left forward pocket ahead of Stephen Carter, who has a couple of metres on his opponent Michael Wakelin, and is able to run into the flight of the ball and mark. His kick for goal is accurate. **Port Adelaide 9.2; Central District 7.8**

22 mins A scrimmage forms deep in Port Adelaide's right forward pocket and Bulldogs on-baller Stephen Schwerdt, showing great courage, dives headlong through a wall of players to gain possession of the ball, which he then attempts to relay by hand to a team mate, only to see the ball cannon back to him off an opponent's shins. Diving on top of the ball once more, Schwerdt drags it under his body in an effort to

get it under control but, with Scott Hodges holding onto his jumper and looking imploringly towards the umpire, he is promptly pinged for holding the ball. Hodges' kick for goal from a tight angle is precision itself, and suddenly the Magpies have some breathing space again. **Port Adelaide 10.3; Central District 7.8**

24 mins Roger Girdham, having marked comfortably on the chest at centre half back for the Bulldogs, looks to play on, and is promptly and fiercely claimed from behind by Tony Malakellis, with the ball being jarred loose in the process. First upon it is David Brown, who fires off a low pass towards Scott Hodges on the edge of the goal square. Hodges briefly gets hands to the ball, but then is sent sprawling headlong by Stephen Schwerdt, whereupon the umpire awards a free for 'in the back'. From near point blank range, Hodges is never going to miss. **Port Adelaide 11.3; Central District 7.8**

27 mins Surrounded by a posse of Port players, Stephen Schwerdt gains possession at centre half back. Faced with no obvious options, he dithers momentarily, and is promptly seized by Tony Malakellis, with the ball spilling to ground and being collected by 'Daisy' Borlase. The Magpie centremen, who has been having an unusually quiet afternoon, prods a kick forward some 7 or 8 metres into the arms of David Brown, who has plenty of time to turn round and make absolutely certain from near point blank range. **Port Adelaide 12.3; Central District 7.8**

29 mins Twenty metres ahead of centre, weight of numbers tells once again for Port Adelaide, as Scott Lee is tackled while in the act of attempting to kick the ball, forcing him to effect an 'airy', and allowing Tony Malakellis to snatch up the loose ball and sprint on his full measure before sinking his boot into a thumping drop punt that sails over Michael Wakelin's head in the goal square before bouncing over the line for what the ABC commentary team of Steven Trigg, Ken Sheldon and Peter Woite, conscious of the fact that, with light but persistent rain continuing, the ground is getting heavier,

regard as “the sealer”. **Port Adelaide 13.3; Central District 7.8**

After having seemed in trouble early in the term, Port Adelaide have recovered superbly to register the last 5 goals of the quarter and go into the 'lemon time' huddle seemingly well in control of the match. Three weeks earlier, Port had gone into the final break leading by a similar margin against North Adelaide, only to overhauled after a limp last quarter performance. Such a capitulation is rare indeed in the history of a club as proud as Port Adelaide, so the chances of it happening again so soon would have to be regarded as extremely remote.

THREE QUARTER TIME: Port Adelaide 13.3 (81); Central District 7.8 (50)

4th Quarter

4 mins Jarrod Cotton, in possession of the ball at centre half forward for the Bulldogs, and just about to off load a hand ball, is flung ferociously to the ground by an increasingly frustrated Michael Wilson, but this only succeeds in adding momentum to the handball which travels forward some 20 metres right into the path of John Abbott. With Darren Mead approaching fast from the goal square, Abbott feints to handball over the Port player's head to his now unmarked opponent, Simon Luhrs. This ploy has the desired effect of causing Mead to pause in his run, whereupon Abbott is able to kick high and true into the hordes of celebrating Bulldog fans behind the goal. **Port Adelaide 13.3; Central District 8.8**

5 mins With Centrals now throwing everything into attack, back pocket Michael Wakelin chases the ball through the centre of the ground, scoops it up, and kicks towards half forward left where Simon Luhrs deftly taps it into the path of Jarrod Cotton, and the rampant half forward's kick just eludes the desperate goal line lunge of Darren Mead to bring the

Bulldogs to within 19 points. **Port Adelaide 13.3; Central District 9.8**

6 mins Crothers' hit-out from the ensuing centre bounce is snared by Potter, who throws the ball hurriedly and blindly onto his left boot. Magpie defender Paul Northeast appears to have it covered, but he loses concentration, and spill the mark. Tim Cook is on the ball in a flash, and before Northeast can tackle him he has shot out a handball to David Green, who runs on and, to a gleeful, almost disbelieving response from the home crowd, sends a prodigious kick over the heads of the goal line pack and through for a goal. **Port Adelaide 13.3; Central District 10.8**

9 mins Scott Stephens' kick from just outside 50 travels towards the goal square where Michael Wilson finds himself confronted by two opponents, Mark Conway and Jarrod Cotton. He successfully spoils Conway's attempt to mark, only to see the ball spill to Cotton who, as Conway provides the shepherd, has no difficulty in registering his fifth goal of the match. **Port Adelaide 13.3; Central District 11.8**

15 mins Roger Girdham's tunnel handball near the centre of the ground is gathered up by Andrew Balkwill who evades a couple of opponents before kicking long towards the goal square. Yet again, the ball sails over everyone's heads, but this time stops short of the goal line. However, Tim Cook is first upon it, and almost in spite of himself manages to soccer it through the goals to bring the Bulldogs to within a couple of points. **Port Adelaide 13.4; Central District 12.8**

17 mins Potter's snap from 30 metres out directly in front veers off line to the right to reduce the margin to a point. **Port Adelaide 13.4; Central District 12.9**

19 mins Port's 2 point margin is restored courtesy of an anti-climactic Scott Hodges behind following a spectacular mark at centre half forward which sees him dive headlong through a pack of players to clasp the ball to his chest

moments before thudding to the ground. **Port Adelaide 13.5; Central District 12.9**

20 mins Mark Conway runs into an open goal from the right forward pocket but the greasy ball skids off the side of his boot and barely registers a behind. **Port Adelaide 13.5; Central District 12.10**

20 mins 30 secs Delaney's kick in following the behind is aimed towards Bienke at half back left, but David Green effects a powerful spoil from behind, and the loose ball is collected by Cook. The former Crows rover feeds MacGowan with a quick handball, and MacGowan relays it back to Green near the boundary. Green's centering kick finds Conway unmarked about 25 metres from goal directly in front, and to tumultuous acclaim from behind the goal, Conway kicks truly to put the Bulldogs in front for the first time in the game. **Central District 13.10; Port Adelaide 13.5**

27 mins Tredrea is tackled fiercely by Girdham near the centre of the ground and the ball bounces free. Stephens is first to reach it, and he pops a short kick forward into the arms of Potter, who runs on and kicks towards the goal square. Trotting almost casually back unattended, Stephen Carter appears to have the ball well covered, but his lethargy is misplaced as the ball just eludes his fingertips and bounces across the line for a dramatic, match-clinching goal. **Central District 14.10; Port Adelaide 13.6**

For the remaining two minutes or so of the game, Centrals are content to play the boundary line on the grandstand wing, effectively nullifying any attempts by Port to mount a viable counter attack.

FINAL SCORE: Central District 14.10 (94); Central District 13.6 (84)

Postscript

Central District duly procured the 1996 minor premiership, ahead of Norwood on percentage (both teams finishing with 15 wins and 5 losses). Port Adelaide went on to win its last two minor round games of the year to clinch the double chance, two wins behind Centrals and Norwood, and one ahead of the Eagles. A 10.18 (78) to 9.11 (65) qualifying final defeat of the Redlegs earned the Magpies another crack at Centrals, but the Bulldogs played with unprecedented zeal, vigour, passion and skill to run out comfortable 24 point winners.

After the Magpies emerged by the skin of their teeth from a tumultuous preliminary final clash with Norwood, most of the smart money was on Centrals procuring a first ever senior flag. However, on grand final day Port Adelaide cranked up the intensity by several notches, and the hapless Bulldogs could not cope. Despite winning four out of the five meetings between the clubs over the course of the year, Centrals had wilted when it really mattered, and the club's tortuous climb to greatness would have to resume from within the maelstrom of yet another devastating disappointment.

"Some are born to greatness; some have greatness thrust upon them" - so goes the famous saying. A decade on from the soul-destroying events of 1996, however, the Central District Football Club has at long last arrived at greatness by a different, but arguably much more satisfying route. After many frustrating years of adversity, false dawns and unfulfilled potential, the club has earned its present vaunted status the hard way, and having struggled so desperately for so long to reach the top of the tree the prospects of its returning to earth in the near future appear remote.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Central District	0.2	4.6	7.8	14.10	94
Port Adelaide	5.0	7.2	13.3	13.6	84

BEST - Centrals: Cotton, MacGowan, Stevens, Cook, Schwerdt, Potter **Port Adelaide:** Brown, Crothers, Hodges, Carter, Ginever

GOALS - Centrals: Cotton 6; Conway, Cook 2; Balkwill, D.Green, P.Green, Potter **Port Adelaide:** Hodges 4; Carter 3; Ginever, T.Malakellis 2; Anderson, Brown

ATTENDANCE: 7,408 at Elizabeth Oval

GAWLER

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

In 1877, a Gawler Football Club was a foundation member of the South Australian Football Association, but it only enjoyed junior status at that time.

Gawler's first fixture under SAFA rules was against Adelaide at the Gawler Parklands on 20th June 1877. 'The SA Advertiser' reported that Adelaide scored after approximately quarter of an hour, with Gawler equalising almost immediately. The match resulted in a one all draw. Later the same season, according to 'The Register', Gawler played host to another senior SAFA club, Woodville, with the visitors winning on this occasion by the only goal of the match.

Season summaries published in 'The Register' in October 1877 and again twelve months later make it apparent that clubs like Gawler only engaged in matches very sporadically at this time.

A Gawler club was admitted to the SAFA, with full senior status, in 1887. It spent four seasons in the competition, finishing sixth (of seven) in 1887 and 1888, fifth (of six) in 1889, and sixth and bottom in its final year. At the end of the 1890 season Gawler withdrew from the SAFA in order to form its own Association. A club representative of the

Gawler region, along with the areas to the immediate south like Elizabeth and Salisbury, was admitted to the SANFL B grade competition sixty-eight years later. In 1964, the Central District Football Club, as it is known, was afforded full senior grade status, and after a somewhat shaky start has gone on to become one of the most prominent and regularly successful clubs in the league.

GLENELG

Club Address: P.O. Box 72, Glenelg 5045, South Australia

Website: www.glenelgfc.com.au

Email: reception@glenelgfc.com.au

Home Ground: Gliderol Stadium (originally known as Glenelg Oval)

Formed: 1920

Colours: Black and gold

Emblem: Tigers (also popularly, but unofficially, known as 'the Bays')

Senior Grade Premierships: 1934, 1973, 1985, 1986 (4 total)

Other Premierships: Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy 1969, 1973, 1975-6, 1981, 1990, 2009-10 (8 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-Season Series 1959, 1971, 1982, 1990, 1992 (5 total)
Magarey Medallists: Jim Handby 1928; George 'Bluey' Johnston 1934; Mel Brock 1940; Marcus Boyall 1941; Allan Crabb 1949*; Dennis 'Fred' Phillis 1969; Kym Hodgeman 1978; Tony McGuinness 1982; Brett Backwell 2006 (8 total)

Tassie Medallists: Graham Cornes 1980 (1 total)

All Australians: Neil Davies 1953; Brian Colbey 1969; Graham Cornes 1979 & 1980 (as a player), and 1987 & 1988 (as non-playing coach); Peter Carey 1979 & 1980; Kym Hodgeman 1979; Keith Kuhlmann 1980; Stephen Kernahan 1985; Chris McDermott 1986 & 1987; Scott Salisbury 1987 (12 total)

League Top Goalkickers: Jack Owens (80) 1928, (83) 1929 & (102) 1932; Colin Churchett (88) 1948, (72) 1949, (105) 1950 & (102) 1951; Dennis 'Fred' Phillis (137) 1969, (107) 1970, (99) 1971, (108) 1975 & (98) 1976; Todd Grima (58) 2010 (13 total)

Highest Score: 49.23 (317) vs. Central District 11.13 (79) at Glenelg Oval in round 17 1975

Most Games: 448 by Peter Carey from 1971 to 1988

Record Home Attendance: 17,171 on 20 July 1968: Sturt 13.13 (91); Glenelg 13.12 (90) Record Finals Attendance: 58,113 for the 1974 grand final at Football Park: Sturt 9.16 (70); Glenelg 8.7 (55)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by SANFL in 1998*

For a club which commenced its league career in just about the most inauspicious way imaginable Glenelg have enjoyed a fair amount of success, though not perhaps enough to satisfy its many supporters. A return of four SANFL premierships in ninety seasons is respectable but by no means outstanding; however, when you consider that three of those premierships have come since 1973, and that the club has claimed the runners-up spot on no fewer than eight occasions during that same period, you cannot escape the conclusion that the reputation of the Glenelg Football Club could - some would doubtless say should - have been a whole lot different.

“Nearly always the bridesmaid but seldom the bride” might be a somewhat facile observation, but it adequately describes the fortunes of Glenelg since the appointment of Donald Neil Kerley to the senior coaching position for the

1967 season. Kerley remained at the Bay Oval for ten seasons, and during that time he established an unfortunate 'tradition' which each of his next 22 half a dozen successors were to maintain, albeit unwittingly. In 1966 the Tigers had finished bottom of the pile, a position with which they were by no means unfamiliar, and the immediate prospects for improvement did not look at all promising. For much of the 1966 season, the Glenelg players had functioned as loose cogs, lacking the cohesion and purpose which yields results.²¹



The Bay Oval during the Kerley era was very much the place to be - and be seen - on a Saturday afternoon.

Glenelg commenced their 1967 campaign with virtually the same group of players who had managed just 3 wins from 20 starts the previous year, but almost from the

²¹ Reviewing the Tigers' 1966 season the *1967 South Australian Record Year Book*, page 27, suggested that the primary reason for the side's fall from grace was that had "relied on the efforts of too few - players such as Colin Richens, Doug Long, Bob Anesbury and Brian McGowan". Moreover, "The selectors 'blooded' many newcomers but gave them insufficient time to settle down. And the incentive payment of \$30 for winning a match was not the answer."

opening bounce of the season it became apparent that there was a difference. At the risk of being over-simplistic, that difference was Kerley. Having already coached both West Adelaide (in 1961) and South Adelaide (three years later) to premierships - the latter after a wooden spoon the previous year - 'the King' as he was affectionately known was eminently qualified for a job which few would have wanted. More to the point, it was exactly the kind of challenge he relished. As a playing coach, he led by inspiration, after the fashion of his great Victorian rival (and friend) Ted Whitten. Kerley's teams tended to play in a resolute, hard-hitting, full-throated fashion which reflected his own philosophy, and the result in Glenelg's case, as it had been in South's, was a rapid climb up the premiership ladder.



Ray Button

In his first season with the Bays, Kerley led from the front in classic style, winning the club's best and fairest award. It was noted that "Often last season his broad shoulders, strong legs and outsize heart guided his young Tiger cubs to victory. Kerley has a reputation as a man of brawn but

adversaries are quick to concede that that phase of his game is no more devastating than his football brain. Since 1953 when he coached Kollymilka to a premiership in the Woomera League, he has not missed a major round.²²

During the 1967 season a number of highly promising youngsters - notably Graham Cornes, Peter Marker and Rex Voigt - had been unearthed, but the retirement at the end of the year of several experienced players left a serious gap which Kerley sought to plug, at least in part, by the audacious recruitment from Central District of his former West Adelaide team mate, Ken Eustice. Famously described by Fos Williams as "pound for pound, the best footballer in Australia", 1962 Magarey Medallist Eustice was still very much at his peak as a player, and was a proven on field leader.

For most of the 1968 season, Kerley's record of never having failed to propel his teams to finals participation seemed likely to continue, as Glenelg - the new 'glamour team' of South Australian football - appeared to be playing with even greater cohesion and purpose than in 1967. For a time, the side even looked likely to qualify for the double chance, but in the final few minor round matches the underlying inexperience of the team told, and the loss of a couple of key games ultimately saw the Tigers finish a game shy of finals qualification in fifth place.

Identifying inexperience, and the susceptibility under pressure which often attends it, as the team's main weakness, Kerley enticed former Bay ruckman Harry Kernahan, who had spent the previous three seasons in Whyalla, back to the fold. It was an inspired move, as Kernahan enjoyed a splendid season, capped by selection for South Australia at the 1969 Adelaide carnival. He was not alone: Ken Eustice, whose form in 1968 had been patchy, was back to his brilliant best, winning the club's best and fairest award; half back flanker Brian Colbey was one of half a dozen Tigers included in South Australia's carnival squad and was accorded All Australian status; high flying Ray Button, who had been under

²² '1968 South Australian Football Record Year Book', page 64.

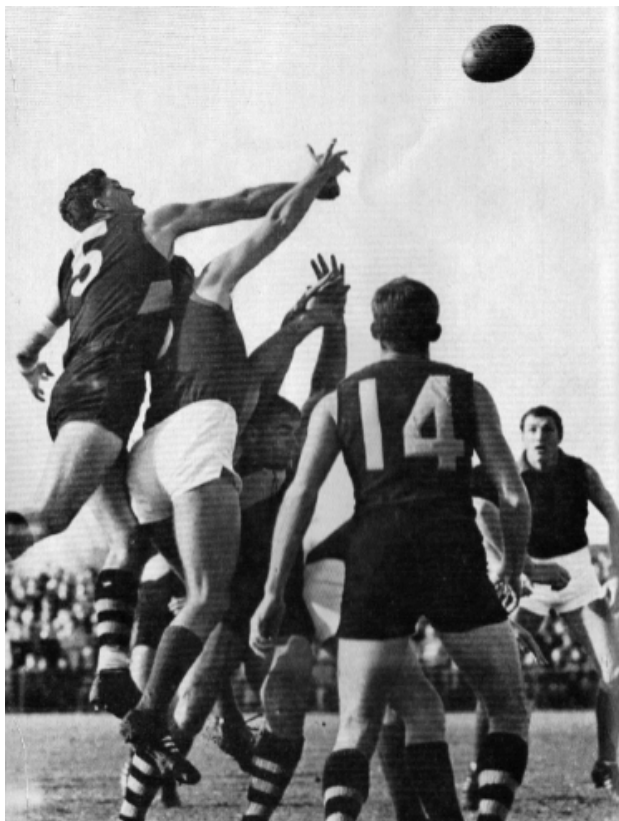
a cloud with injury for several seasons, recaptured his most dynamic and spectacular form to give the side a formidable marking presence in the forward lines; and previously wayward 23 full forward 'Fred' Phillis finally found his shooting boots to become the first SANFL player since Colin Churchett (also of Glenelg) in 1951 to kick a century of goals. Phillis was rewarded with the 1969 Magarey Medal, becoming in the process the first full forward in history to win the award.



Australian Prime Minister John Gorton tosses the coin prior to the start of the 1969 preliminary final.

Prior to the Australian interstate championships in June Glenelg was in awesome, indefatigable form, winning all 9 matches played, and all bar one by hefty margins. Combining the power and aggression traditionally associated with Port Adelaide with precision skills of the sort that had played a big part in carrying Sturt to the previous three premierships, the Bays looked to have found a guaranteed

winning formula, in the process elevating football in South Australia to a new level. During the second half of the season, however, a few chinks began to appear, and losses during the final 9 games to each of the other three eventual finalists - Sturt, West Adelaide and West Torrens - posed more questions than they answered.



Doug Long wins a tap against Norwood at the Bay Oval.

Some of the answers were perhaps uncovered during a second semi final in which Glenelg proved incapable of maintaining a finals intensity for the full two hours, and eventually went under by 38 points to resurgent Sturt which had seemingly come good just at the right time. In the following week's preliminary final, however, the Bays tapped into a vein of form reminiscent of that which they had displayed during the first half of the year, and swept West Adelaide aside with ease by 53 points.

Pundits previewing the 1969 grand final were confronted by a quandary: which was the 'real Glenelg'? Equally to the point, what impact would Royce Hart, who had been leased by the South Australian Tigers from their Victorian counterparts, have on the game?²³ Perhaps predictably, the forecasters were divided, although on balance there were probably slightly more who sided with the preview writer in the grand final issue of the 'Football Budget' in regarding the Double Blues' extra finals experience as the most likely decisive factor.²⁴ Bill Sutherland, however, writing in 'Footy World', was not entirely alone in predicting an upset:

I expect Glenelg to have reaped enough benefit from last Saturday's victory against West Adelaide to enable them to take their second League premiership

.And:

²³ Richmond centre half forward Hart, who was a National Serviceman, had been stationed in Adelaide during the 1969 season, and had been training with Glenelg under Kerley during the week. However, at weekends he would be flown across to Melbourne by Richmond in order to play in the VFL. A drawn game in the SANFL finals meant that the SA grand final would be played a week later than that in the VFL, and a somewhat controversial leasing arrangement was entered into whereby Hart, who had been a member of Richmond's grand final winning team the week before, could play alongside his season long training companions in a bid to make it 2 flags in 2 weeks.

²⁴'South Australian Football Budget', 4/10/69, page 6.

*I think that the Glenelg side is at least five goals better than recent Port Adelaide final sides. Bearing in mind that Sturt took three and a half quarters to get away from the Magpies last year I think Glenelg will take this year's pennant.*²⁵

To the immense disappointment of its hordes of success-starved supporters, Glenelg capitulated to both tension and the opposition, in more or less equal measure, in the 1969 grand final. Sturt won with almost embarrassing ease by 65 points, racking up a record grand final score in the process. Possibly the only bright spot to emerge for the Bays was the effort of 'Fred' Phillis in edging past Ken Farmer's thirty- three year old record for the most goals kicked by an individual in a season. Back in 1936, Farmer had booted 134 goals; Phillis' 5 in this match took his total for the year to 137. This achievement by Phillis apart, however, Marker, Hart, Terry Crabb, Chris Hunt and Kernahan were almost alone among the Glenelg players in putting in performances commensurate with their ability. 'King' Kerley, who retired as a player after the game, clearly had his work cut out to transform Glenelg from also rans into the genuine article.

For much of the 1970 season, however, the team appeared to be going backwards, and in the end finals qualification was only procured on percentage. With just 11 wins from 20 minor round games - the lowest total by a finalist since 1962 - Glenelg had done 24 little to convince anyone of its premiership credentials. September is a month apart, however, and the Tigers of 1970 played probably the club's best finals football since its only ever flag, in 1934. Both the first semi final, against North Adelaide, and the preliminary final, against Port Adelaide, were hard, gruelling affairs against high standard opposition, but the Bays performed with conviction and tenacity in both to emerge victorious by 16 and 18 points respectively. 'Fred' Phillis booted his 100th goal of the season in the preliminary final. If the two lead up finals

²⁵ 'Footy World', volume 3, number 27, 30/9/69, page 1.

had been arduous, they were nothing compared to the 'big one'.



No, not that mark, but one of many other “screamers” taken by Graham Cornes during his 16 season, 317 game League career with the Bays.

On a cool, wet, windy afternoon, viewed by probably less than half of the 48,575 spectators in attendance,²⁶ Glenelg and Sturt engaged in two hours of open air, all in mud wrestling in which the Double Blues' 4 goals to 1 third quarter proved decisive. Peter Marker, with 30 possessions, played a splendid game for Glenelg in the pivot, with Graham Cornes, Ray Button, Brian Colbey and John Sandland also prominent. Perhaps crucially, however, Bays rover Rex Voigt, later to win the club's 1971 best and fairest award, was heavily felled early on, and managed only 6 kicks over the final three quarters of the match. Meanwhile, Sturt rovers Rigney and Endersbee were among their side's most damaging performers.

At Glenelg's Annual General Meeting in February coach Neil Kerley told club members that the team was "at the crossroads" and "a premiership was essential in 1971 or 1972".²⁷ In the event, the 1971 and '72 seasons proved to be Kerley's worst as a league coach up to that point, as the Bays plummeted to sixth both years. In hindsight, it seems clear that Kerley's 'Mark One' Tigers reached their peak in 1969, when a premiership was probably within reach, but was ultimately missed; then, following the retirement over the next few seasons of key, experienced players like Doug Long (who retired in 1969 after 135 games), Ken Eustice (1970 - 52 games), Harry Kernahan (1971 - 176 games), Keith Pattinson (1971 - 91 games), Terry Crabb (1971 - 65 games) - not to mention Kerley himself (1969 - 55 games) - it became necessary to re-build. In this context, Glenelg's 1970 grand final appearance can be viewed as a veritable over-achievement, while its returns of 9 wins in 1971 and 11 wins in '72 were probably more truly indicative of ability. All this time, however, the seeds of the club's greatest ever season -

²⁶ On a fine day, a football match at Adelaide Oval afforded optimal viewing for a maximum of perhaps 40,000 spectators. If it rained, however, the 'umbrella factor' came into play, reducing that total significantly.

²⁷ Reported in 'The 1971 South Australian Football Record Year Book', page 33.

indeed, one of the greatest seasons in South Australian football history - were being sown.

In 1973, the quintessential 'Kerley method' - glimpsed, perhaps, in 1964 with South Adelaide, and again with the 1969 Tigers - came at last to full fruition. Glenelg in '73 was, in terms of its average standard of performance, a VFL side in all but name. With the exception of its round 7 meeting with North Adelaide at Prospect it not only never lost, but - until that fateful 'one day in September' - it never looked even remotely like doing so. "There's greater depth this year," observed Kerley half way through the year, endeavouring to pinpoint the reason for the team's spectacular improvement. "And we've got bigger players - and the biggest are a lot quicker than those of the past. Experience is another factor. This is a good side."²⁸

Just how good became clear after the round 15 return meeting with North Adelaide when the Bays blasted the reigning Australian champions off Glenelg Oval to the tune of a staggering 160 points. It was, according to Kerley, "the best effort I've seen from a Glenelg side", while Alan Shiell, writing in 'The Sunday Mail', suggested that "the remarkably ruthless manner in which Glenelg tore North apart almost defies description".²⁹

The Bays were in a similarly merciless frame of mind for the second semi final, in which they demolished their nemesis of '69 and '70, Sturt, with arrogant ease, 20.13 (133) to 11.10 (76). Surely now nothing could stand in the way of 'Kerley's Mob' as they 25 sought that elusive 'holy grail' of football, the Thomas Seymour Hill trophy?

The 1973 SANFL grand final, the last to be played on Adelaide Oval, would have to be a serious contender for the title of 'best ever'. Glenelg's grand final opponents, North Adelaide, had, in addition to the 1972 club championship of

²⁸ Quoted in *Pride of the Bay: the Story of Glenelg Football Club* by Peter Cornwall and John Wood, page 202. The word 'good' is a Kerley-ism meaning 'superb, outstanding or great'.

²⁹ Ibid, page 202.

Australia, won both of the previous two premierships and, in Barrie Robran, boasted a player who, in the view of some, was the most audaciously gifted exponent of the game in history. In the previous weekend's preliminary final the Roosters had vanquished the Double Blues with even greater conviction, and by an even greater victory margin (87 points), than Glenelg had managed in the second semi. This time 'round it most emphatically would not be a repeat of the round 15 meeting between the two sides.

Right from the outset of the 1973 grand final it was clear that Glenelg was in for its toughest match for some time. Kicking with the aid of a strong breeze, North Adelaide withstood a strong start from the Tigers to outscore them 7.6 to 4.3 in a vibrant, free-flowing opening term. The second quarter saw the Bays fight back to lead 9.10 to 8.10 at half time, and when they emerged from a topsy-turvy third term still 8 points to the good, and with the aid of the wind to come in the final quarter, victory, and that long sought flag, seemed assured. However, the Roosters staged a desperate fight back which saw them lead by 5 points with three minutes of time-on already played. What followed rapidly found a place in South Australian football folk lore - not to mention becoming a conspicuous cornerstone of the tradition, indeed the very soul, of the Glenelg Football Club.

With time running out, the Bays mounted one last, frenzied assault on goal, only to come up against the stern, resolute figure of North Adelaide's veteran full back, Bob Hammond, who had been virtually impassable all day. With an apparent calmness that he probably did not feel, Hammond careered out of the backlines paddling the ball in front of him; finally, the ball reached a recumbent Neil Sachse in the left half back flank region, and he endeavoured to handball it over the boundary line. However, Glenelg's twentieth man, Craig Marriott, who had only just come onto the ground, and was probably the only player afield still with a spring in his step, managed to intercept the ball, and launch a towering, hopeful punt kick back towards goal. The ball came back to earth in Glenelg's right forward pocket, directly into

the waiting hands of Graham Cornes, who had taken the preliminary insurance of perching two metres above the ground on the necks of the anticipatory pack of players. Cornes, who had had, by his standards, a somewhat quieter than usual game, coolly went back and goaled with a nonchalance that belied the acuteness of the angle: Glenelg was in front by a point.

If poetic justice had been served, that was how it ought to have ended, but Glenelg's nineteenth man John Sandland added another goal after the siren to give an illusion of comfort to the scoreline, the Bays winning by 7 points, 21.11 (137) to 19.16 (130).

Centre half forward Peter Carey and rover- cum-forward pocket Rex 'Noddy' Voigt, with 6 and 7 goals respectively, vied for Glenelg's best, while prolific kick winning centreman Kerry Hamilton, Western Australian rover Greg Bennett, and full back Peter Anderson - a former North Adelaide player - were others among many to shine.

In the Australian club championships the following week Glenelg, playing in unfamiliar pastel-coloured jumpers, probably paid the price for conferring too much respect on 1st round opponents, Richmond, enabling the VFL Tigers to 'get the jump' and lead by 41 points at the main break. Thereafter, Glenelg performed much more fluently, getting to within 15 points at the death. In the consolation match, Tasmanian team Scottsdale was comprehensively put to the sword, the Bays 26 winning by 133 points, 29.27 (201) to 10.8 (68).

When asked about the secret of his coaching success, Kerley denied that he had one. "My methods have been the same with West, South and the Bays," he said, adding that the only thing he would not tolerate was "anything less than 100% effort".³⁰

At the conclusion of their all-conquering 1973 season the Bays seemed poised for a long reign at the top but, as so often happens, subsequent events demonstrated that it was much more difficult to sustain success than to achieve it in the

³⁰ '1974 South Australian Football Record Year Book', page 11.

first place. Kerley remained at the helm until the end of the 1976 season, but the best Glenelg could manage were runners-up spots in 1974 and 1975. However, it was clear on his departure that the Bay Oval was a much healthier place all round than it had been on his arrival, and indeed during Kerley's tenure it became increasingly common for references to be made to 'the Big Four' of South Australian football - Port Adelaide, Norwood, Sturt and Glenelg. The reasons for this designation probably had to do with perceived financial resources as much as on-field achievement, but it could not be denied that, in a football sense at least, Glenelg had finally arrived on the map.³¹

In other senses, that 'arrival' took place a good deal earlier. Indeed, some of the very first European settlers in South Australia landed at Glenelg,³² but although a small settlement was established there, the majority of the newcomers headed inland. Today, of course, Glenelg is an integral part of the Adelaide metropolitan area, but for much of the nineteenth century it was an isolated outpost.³³ Nevertheless, sport of many kinds, including football, was played, and during the nineteenth century there were, at differing times, at least two football clubs bearing the name of

³¹ A graphic example of Glenelg's elevated status is afforded by attendance figures. During the first three seasons of the ten team competition Glenelg attracted an average of 7,437 spectators to league matches played on its home ground. This average rose to 10,084 during the ten year 'reign of King Kerley', a figure only exceeded by Port Adelaide among the other nine SANFL clubs.

³² According to Bill Lyne in *Explore Glenelg* (Adelaide, The National Trust of South Australia, 1989), page 3, the H.M.S. Buffalo, which left Plymouth on 27 July 1836, and arrived at Glenelg on 28 December the same year, was the first ship carrying European colonists to arrive at Glenelg. It was followed shortly afterwards, on 12 January 1837, by the Coromandel, which had set sail from Deal on 26 September previous. These two ships were, respectively, the ninth and tenth to land in South Australia bearing colonists. The previous eight vessels all arrived at Nepean Bay between July and November 1836.

³³ Glenelg's isolation from the city centre was gradually addressed by the construction of a railway link in the 1870s, and the ANZAC Highway half a century later. In 1929 the rail link was transformed into the now famous tram line.

the township. Both these clubs, however, proved to be short-lived.

In 1898 considerable impetus was given to sport in the district when Glenelg Oval, eventual home of the Glenelg Football Club, was opened.

During the early years of the twentieth century the Glenelg area, which at the time boasted a population of only about 8,000, was represented in various junior level football competitions, but it could hardly be claimed that the groundwork was being laid for admission to the state's senior competition, the South Australian Football League. Nevertheless, shortly after world war one the Glenelg Oval Association launched an audacious application for league membership and although this did not meet with initial approval there was sufficient encouragement given to ensure that the matter would not be permanently dropped.

In 1919, a prototype Glenelg Football Club participated in, and won the premiership of, the United Suburban Football Association, in the process raising the profile of the sport in the locality, and engendering a substantial amount of public interest together with - and perhaps more to the point - financial and political backing. Glenelg Oval was upgraded, and fenced, and in March 1920 the mayor of Glenelg, John Mack, presided over a meeting at the town hall at which a new 'Glenelg Football Club' was inaugurated, and plans to seek affiliation with the SAFL discussed. The SAFL at this time was a seven team competition, and there was a strong desire in league circles to eliminate the inevitable weekly 'bye' via the admission of an eighth club. With the backing of the mayor and other local luminaries, and the strong support of neighbouring league side, Sturt, Glenelg was fast emerging as the favourite to fill the vacancy.

Events moved apace in those days: when the new football season kicked off less than two months after the town hall public meeting, Glenelg was a member of the SAFL 'B' grade, where it would reside for a probationary term of still to be determined duration. In colours of red, yellow and black,

the newcomers performed creditably for much of the 1920 season, winning 3 of their 27 14 matches to finish seventh. Considering the haste with which everything had been put together, and allowing for the fact that many of the best Glenelg-based footballers had, understandably, opted to play at league level with other clubs rather than in 'B' grade with Glenelg during 1920, the consensus was that the season had been a success.

This certainly appears to have been the view of the SAFL management committee, which on 4 October 1920 unanimously endorsed Glenelg's application for full league membership, effective from the following season.

In hindsight, during the course of the next four years there must have been many who came to regard the SAFL's decision as premature. During that time, the Glenelg Football Club blundered its way into the record books in spectacular, unparalleled fashion, losing every one of 56 league matches contested; indeed, during the entire course of its first ten SAFL seasons, Glenelg never once finished higher than seventh on the ladder, and managed a paltry success rate of just 15.1%. By any objective criteria, it would seem that the club was not ready for the demands of league football.

Nevertheless, a league competition without Glenelg during the 1920s might have robbed aficionados of the game of the delight of seeing players of the calibre of Len Sallis, Jim Handby and Jack Owens in action. Sallis was a combative but simultaneously highly skilful centreman who played 172 games for Glenelg between 1924 and 1935, winning the club's best and fairest award on five occasions; old timers remember him for his sure ball handling, irrespective of opposition pressure, and tremendous disposal skills.

Handby, the club's first Magarey Medallist, shifted from South Adelaide in 1925 and made his debut in Glenelg's first ever league win; he was a determined, energetic and forceful player who played 123 games for the club - interestingly, without kicking a single goal - between 1925 and 1932. Broken Hill- born Owens was the first in a long line of great Glenelg full forwards; between 1924 and 1935 he

played 177 games for the club, booting 827 goals, and heading the league goalkicking list on three occasions.



Len Sallis

Two of these men, Sallis and Owens, were teammates when Glenelg surprised the football world by winning the 1934 premiership. Prior to 1934, the Seaside as they were popularly known at the time had never finished above sixth on the ladder, but under the coaching of former West Adelaide champion Bruce McGregor, appointed the previous year, the side had begun to play a tougher, more resolute - and ultimately much more successful - brand of football. In 1933, Glenelg enjoyed what the Americans term 'a winning season' for the first ever time, emerging victorious from 9 of

its 17 league fixtures. The following year saw it overcome a slow start to transform itself into a formidable combination, vying for supremacy for much of the season with perennial powerhouse, Port Adelaide. In the end, both Glenelg and Port finished the minor round equal on points, and ahead of all other teams, with the Magpies' marginally better percentage securing the minor premiership.

The Seaside's first ever league final was an ostensible disaster which may, in fact, have constituted just the kind of wake-up call required to transform them from pretenders into bona fide contenders. Port Adelaide won with ease, 22.21 (159) to 13.16 (94), as Glenelg displayed a brittleness and indecisiveness which had not been apparent since the opening couple of games of the season.

Such frailties were swept aside the following week, however, as Glenelg came roaring home in the last quarter to defeat Sturt by 13 points, having trailed narrowly at every change. Despite this, few pundits could see any reason to tip anything other than a substantial Port Adelaide grand final win.

The 1934 SANFL grand final³⁴ was one of the most exhilarating witnessed up to that point. Played at breakneck pace, Port Adelaide managed the first goal of the 28 afternoon but never thereafter led. The majority of the Glenelg players put in the performances of their lives, enabling them to resist everything that their more illustrious opponents could throw at them. Nevertheless, when Port levelled the scores late on in the final term there would have been few members of the 30,045 strong crowd who did not expect them to go on with the job. "Blue" Johnston, however, had other ideas, and his spectacular defensive mark on the goal line moments later effectively transformed the momentum of the game, precipitating as it did the move from which Glenelg secured the match winning goal. Final scores were Glenelg 18.15 (123); Port Adelaide 16.18 (114). Few at the Port could

³⁴ The South Australian Football League (SAFL) became the South Australian National Football League (SANFL) in 1927.

believe it, but the rest of the League rejoiced along with Glenelg.

Best in a fairly even team display by the victors was spring-heeled centre half forward Arch Goldsworthy, with the fleet-footed roving trio of Arthur Link, Roy Colyer and Lance Leak also exerting a decisive influence.



Jim Handby

Glenelg now seemed poised for a sustained period of success, but the club's fall from grace was to be even more dramatic than its rise. In 1935, the team managed just 1 victory from 17 games, finishing last; it was the most spectacular premiership hangover in SANFL history, and the remaining pre-war years only added to the pain. Between 1935 and 1940 the team finished bottom every year bar one, managing a success rate of just 16.2%. There was slight

improvement in 1941 - 5 wins and sixth position on the ladder - but then the league scaled down for three years, with the eight clubs pairing off according to their geographical positions. Glenelg's partner during this time was West Adelaide, and it was through the agency of this partnership that Glenelg players managed, in 1942, to contest the club's second grand final. This time around, however, Port had revenge, of sorts, as the Port Adelaide-West Torrens combination won by 11 points.

Glenelg-West Adelaide finished third in 1943, and last in 1944, before full scale competition was resumed in 1945.

Unfortunately for Glenelg, its immediate post war achievements were almost as limited as those of the pre-war years. In 1949, however, things began to improve. Glenelg adopted the somewhat controversial measure of appointing former Port Adelaide champion Alan 'Bull' Reval, who had played for the Magpies in the 1934 grand final, as coach. Under Reval's aggressive and disciplined regime the Bays, who this season adopted the 'Richmond Tiger' style of jumper, finally learned how to win, and although the finals were missed, it was a close run thing, with Glenelg managing to defeat every one of the eventual finals participants at least once during the year.

Somewhat surprisingly, Reval was replaced as coach by Johnny Taylor in 1950, but the winning habit continued to develop rapidly. Under Taylor, Glenelg enjoyed its best concerted spell in league company up to that point, finishing second, third, and fifth, before running third again in 1953 under Taylor's successor, Pat Hall. The key ingredients of this success were plain to see: with players of the calibre of ruckman Allan Crabb, full forward Colin Churchett, and the Taylor brothers, Johnny and Don, the newly christened 'Tigers' were a match for almost any opponent. Unfortunately, however, although the Glenelg sides of this era proved capable of winning finals, the ultimate prize eluded them.

In Hall's second season as coach, 1954, the good times finally evaporated in emphatic fashion as the Tigers plummeted to last. Over the next thirteen seasons the club's

finals involvement would be both sporadic and fleeting.³⁵ Not until Neil Kerley's arrival in 1967 would the Tigers become consistent protagonists at the business end of each season.

Following Kerley's departure in 1976, that regular finals involvement would continue until the South Australian - and indeed 29 Australian - football landscape was irrevocably and dramatically altered with the formation of the Adelaide Crows in 1991. Since that time Glenelg has, with the exception of one losing grand final, in 1992, been more or less consistently on the outer in terms of viable premiership ambition.

Between 1977 and 1990, however, Glenelg was indefatigably one of the elite, as the following table clearly shows:

Summary SANFL Ladder 1977 to 1990									
	P	W	L	D	Flags	Second	Finals	Last	Success Rate
Port Adelaide	335	229	103	3	7	1	12	0	68.8%
Glenelg	342	214	125	3	2	6	12	0	63.0%
Norwood	343	205	136	2	3	1	14	0	60.1%
North Adelaide	321	163	156	2	1	3	6	1	51.1%
Central District	315	150	160	5	0	0	5	1	48.4%
Sturt	319	152	164	3	0	2	6	2	48.1%
West Adelaide	320	146	170	4	1	0	4	1	46.3%
South Adelaide	318	131	185	2	0	1	5	2	41.5%
West Torrens	308	112	194	2	0	0	2	1	36.5%
Woodville	309	96	213	0	0	0	3	6	31.1%

Neil Kerley's immediate successor as coach was former Carlton legend John Nicholls, under whose guidance the Tigers narrowly lost the 1977 grand final to Port Adelaide. Further losing grand finals followed in 1981 and 1982 under

³⁵Between 1955 and 1966 Glenelg reached the preliminary final in 1959 and the 1st semi final in 1964.

ex Sturt champion John Halbert, and it seemed clear that the club was, in a sense, marking time. This impression persisted under Halbert's successor, Graham Campbell, who in two seasons at the helm was unable to steer the club above third place.



Colin Churchett sends the ball towards the big sticks.

If 'King Kerley's' reign had witnessed the establishment of an embryonic Tiger Dynasty, it was Graham Cornes' six year tenure which saw its full flowering. Already assured of a prominent and distinguished entry in the Bay annals for his exploits as a player,³⁶ Graham Cornes'

³⁶ A triple Glenelg best and fairest winner, Cornes also topped the club's goal kicking list in 1977. In the interstate arena he was prominent for over a decade, twice gaining All Australian selection, and winning the 1980 Tassie Medal.

achievements as a coach would qualify him for a whole new chapter.

Cornes returned to the Bay Oval in 1985 after spending two seasons as coach of South Adelaide. To refer to this period as a 'coaching apprenticeship' would be insulting to South, but it nevertheless seems reasonable to suppose that Cornes would have derived a great deal of invaluable experience from working with players of inferior ability to those with whom he had spent the majority of his playing career.

Under Cornes in 1985, the Tigers played aggressive, wholly team oriented football which improved as the season wore on. They finished the minor round second on the ladder and progressed to the grand final with wins over Norwood (30 points) and minor premiers North Adelaide (14 points), earning warm premiership favouritism for their grand final rematch with the Roosters.³⁷ According to Andrew Capel:

This year Glenelg has height, speed and skill and it also has the ability to fight back when the chips are down. In its two finals games, Glenelg has sometimes been awesome but mostly it has been tough and persistent. The Bays may not have a side full of stars as in past years but it (sic.) has a team who are all working hard at achieving the same goal - a premiership, and so far they have worked mighty hard for it.

Moreover, referring to the alleged psychological frailties which had contributed to Glenelg's habit of 'freezing' in important games - the side had lost its last five grand finals - Capel went on:

The Tigers now have the physical and mental toughness needed to win big games. Glenelg's spirit is strong and it will fight

³⁷ For example, the pundits in 'Football Times' (3/10/85) were split 6 to 1 in favour of the Bays.

*to the end. Its players appear desperate and hungry for the ball and Cornes has finally found the right team balance.*³⁸

This assessment proved to be wholly accurate. After trailing early, the Bays proved too powerful and cohesive for their talented but, on this occasion, disappointingly brittle opponents, winning comfortably in the end by 57 points. Centre half forward Stephen Kernahan earned the Jack Oatey Medal with a typically imperious, all action, 7 goal performance, while ruck-rover Peter Maynard, back pocket Ross Gibbs, rover Tony McGuinness and wingman Tony Symonds were not far behind him in effectiveness.

In some ways, Glenelg's premiership year of 1985 represented a watershed in the development of football in South Australia. After the grand final young champions Stephen Kernahan (136 games in five seasons) and Tony McGuinness (112 games, also in five seasons, plus the 1982 Magarey Medal) announced that they would be heading east to the VFL in 1986. They would be joined by other high profile South Australians in the shape of Craig Bradley (Port Adelaide), Peter Motley (Sturt) and John Platten (Central District). Although the defection of star players to Victoria was not in itself a new occurrence, the departure of this particular quintet was arguably significant in that all five had made substantial contributions, indicative of genuine commitment and loyalty, to their SANFL clubs before leaving. In Kernahan's case, the departure had been quite deliberately delayed until he had helped the Tigers win a flag, while Platten would, after leaving, make frequent reference to his long term ambition of eventually returning home to help the Bulldogs do the same.³⁹ In subsequent seasons, the flood of defecting South Australian players accelerated, and it is at least arguable that few if any regarded their SANFL clubs with quite the same degrees of affection and esteem as had

³⁸ 'Football Times', volume 10, number 27, 3/10/85, page 9.

³⁹ See *Sticks: the Stephen Kernahan Story* by Harry Kernahan with Tony de Bolfo and *The Rat: the Story of a Football Braveheart* by John Platten with Ken Piesse.

Kernahan, Bradley, Platten, Motley and McGuinness. Certainly by the end of the 1990s the perception of the overwhelming majority of SANFL players was that they were competing in a league which had as its primary raison d'être the nurturing and development of future AFL talent.



As far as the Glenelg Football was concerned, this process effectively stymied and undermined all the progress which had been made over the preceding quarter of a century or so. However, in 1986 it was still in its early stages, and Glenelg under Cornes was still playing taut, powerful, effective football, which culminated in another grand final demolition of North Adelaide. This time the Bays were on top right from the opening bounce, leading at every change by 24, 33 and 42 points, before coasting to a 21.9 (135) to 12.15 (87) victory. Hawthorn-bound Tony Hall emulated Stephen Kernahan with a best afield performance from centre half forward, while evergreen ruckman Peter Carey, wingman David Kernahan, on ballers Peter Maynard and Chris McDermott, and centre half back Max Kruse all put in sterling efforts. Needless to say, coach Cornes was elated:

"It's a terrific feeling. There were a few doubting Thomases last year who thought we couldn't do it without a couple of key players in Stephen Kernahan and Tony McGuinness and they were good players for us, but this year the boys have really had to work for it and today was just a fruition for all their efforts.

*"I thought the start of the 2nd quarter performance was just phenomenal. I've never seen them play better."*⁴⁰

In retrospect, the 1986 grand final saw the Glenelg Football Club at its zenith, for although four grand finals have been contested since, all have been lost. The formation of the Adelaide Crows at the end of a 1990 season which had seen the Bays go under in an acrimonious grand final against Port Adelaide arguably damaged Glenelg more than any other club. Of the Crows' initial list of fifty-two players, no fewer than ten - easily the biggest single club contribution - were from Glenelg. Indeed, if you include returning son Tony McGuinness, there were actually eleven players, or more than half a team, tied to the Tigers. Of even greater significance, however, was the loss of Graham Cornes, who was enticed

⁴⁰ Quoted in 'Football Times', volume 11, number 30, 9/10/86, page 3.

away to become Adelaide's inaugural coach, despite having earlier expressed misgivings over the VFL's real, underlying motives in pursuing a pseudo-national format for its competition.

Glenelg's comparative fall from grace over the past two decades has been mirrored at many clubs Australia-wide in recent years, heralding a trend which only seems set to continue. The Bays' only senior grade grand final appearances since the formation of the Adelaide Football Club came in 1992, when they lost heavily to Port Adelaide, and 2008, when Central District achieved a similarly emphatic victory. In 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2002 the club succumbed to the ultimate indignity of the wooden spoon. Nevertheless, Glenelg has indisputably made a contribution to the history of the game which far transcends its ostensibly modest record of four league premierships. Whatever tangible success (or otherwise) the future brings, the impact on the game of players like Sallis, Handby, Owens, Johnston, Boyall, Brock, Davies, the Phillis brothers, Marker, Cornes, Kernahan, McGuinness and McDermott will, hopefully, never be forgotten.

Bays Bounce Back

1934 SANFL Grand Final: Glenelg vs. Port Adelaide

To say Glenelg's record during its first thirteen seasons of league football was inauspicious would be putting it mildly. The club's overall success rate was a calamitous 21.7 and only once - in 1933 - did it manage to win more games during a season than it lost. One thing Glenelg did possess, however, was plenty of individual players of high quality, several of whom were at the forefront of the team's sudden and unexpected emergence as a power in 1934.

Perhaps foremost among these players was ruckman George 'Blue' Johnston, winner of that year's Magarey Medal, and one of the most inspirational players ever to pull on a black and gold jumper. Others included tenacious and talented defender Mel Brock, who would win a Magarey Medal himself in 1940, deadly sharp-shooter Jack Owens, and the abundantly skilled Len Sallis, five times a Glenelg best and fairest award winner.

Signs that the Bays would be an improved combination in 1934 were slow in arriving. The side lost its first three minor round matches, to West Adelaide (by 8 points), West Torrens (18 points), and Port Adelaide (a soul-destroying 131 points). In round 4, it scraped a draw against North Adelaide, but round 5 brought another loss, by 15 points to Sturt. The first win did not arrive until round 6, when eventual wooden spooners South Adelaide were overhauled to the tune of 29 points, but even this did not herald a marked improvement in fortunes, and when the Bays lined up at home to Port Adelaide on 7 July their overall record of 3 wins and a draw from 9 matches was scarcely the stuff of potential finalists, let alone premiers.

The Port Adelaide match afforded the first indication that Glenelg could cope with finals-style pressure football. With "Blue" Johnston, who was celebrating his 100th league game, in typically irrepressible form all around the ground, and hitherto 'unsung' players like Len Griffiths and Albert James defending heroically, the Bays were comprehensively the better side in winning by 26 points, 16.14 (110) to 11.18 (84). The victory sparked a sequence of 6 wins from the final 7 minor round games to produce a 10-6-1 season's record, and qualification for a first ever finals series in 2nd place on the ladder, behind minor premier Port Adelaide only on percentage.

By their own high standards, the Magpies had not enjoyed the most successful of times since the end of the Great War, claiming only two flags in fifteen years, and their form early in the 1934 season did not suggest that any immediate improvement was in the offing. Like Glenelg,

however, Port came good over the second half of the season, winning the last seven minor round games, many of them by prodigious margins, to be firmly installed as most people's premiership favourite. After a one-sided 2nd semi final that saw the Magpies outclass the Bays to the tune of 65 points, that favouritism was intensified.



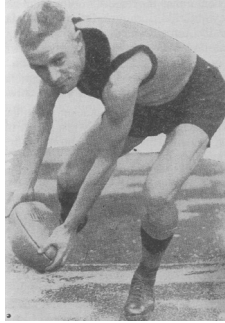
Glenelg ruckman 'Blue' Johnston takes the grab from which he was to kick the game's decisive goal late in the final quarter.

Commenting on that 2nd semi final loss, Glenelg's champion centreman Len Sallis remarked, "All the boys were too excited. They over-ran the ball, they played bad football, they didn't mark well and they couldn't kick".⁴¹ A big improvement was clearly going to be necessary if the Bays were to withstand the fierce challenge likely be afforded by preliminary final opponent Sturt, a finals-hardened combination that had contested two of the previous three grand finals.

The preliminary final proved to be a close, tense, frantically fought encounter, with the Double Blues seeming to have the edge until late on, when a Len Sallis-inspired revival saw Glenelg narrowly over the line. The Bays won by 13 points, 12.11 (83) to 9.16 (70), and although they had

⁴¹ Quoted in *Pride Of The Bay* by Peter Cornwall and John Wood, page 60.

probably not done enough to suggest that they were capable of reversing the 2nd semi final result on grand final day, there is little doubt that most people expected them to get a good deal closer than 65 points.



Ray Colyer

Both sides had non-playing coaches. Glenelg was coached by former West Adelaide champion Bruce McGregor, while Len Ashby (ex-West Torrens) was in charge of Port. The Bays' captain was Jack Owens, and Port's Vic Johnson.

It was a fine day, and the match attracted a crowd of 30,045, who would be treated to one of the all-time great grand finals in South Australian football history.

1st Quarter

The match commenced at a frenetic pace, with neither side able to maintain the initiative for long. Port Adelaide kicked the first goal of the game, but Glenelg fought back quickly, and by the fifteen minute mark the scores were deadlocked, 2.2 (14) apiece. As is often the case in grand finals, neither side had truly managed to settle up to this point, but over the final few minutes of the term the Bays suddenly managed to tap into a rich vein of form to rattle on 3 goals without reply. Port players found themselves haplessly chasing shadows as Glenelg continued to perform at the

breakneck pace that had characterised the opening minutes. The Bays had clear winners in centre half forward Archie Goldsworthy, centreman Len Sallis, and defender Mel Brock, while rover Roy Colyer was engaged in a 'battle royal' with Port's Bob Quinn. Besides Quinn, the Magpies had also been well served by wingman Jack Dermody and centre half forward Albie Hollingsworth, but overall it had been Glenelg's term.

QUARTER TIME: Glenelg 5.4 (34); Port Adelaide 2.4 (16)

2nd Quarter

The Magpies hit back hard in the 2nd quarter, but atrocious kicking for goal prevented them from making any inroads into the Bays' lead. Port added 4.9 for the term, with key forward Albie Hollingsworth the worst offender (he ended the match with 4.7 to his name), while the Bays duplicated their opening quarter effort by kicking 5.4. Some of Port's misses were attributable to the fierce pressure being applied by the Glenelg backmen, but quite a few were simply the result of poor kicking. For much of the year, Port Adelaide had been renowned for "the machine-like system"⁴² of its play, but the Bays showed that success in football stems at least as much, if not more, from the emotion and will of the players as from tactics, strategies and methods of play.

HALF TIME: Glenelg 10.8 (68); Port Adelaide 6.13 (49)

3rd Quarter

Port Adelaide opened the 3rd quarter by registering a 6th consecutive behind, whereupon the Bays moved into top gear by registering 3 quick goals. The danger signs were now clearly apparent for the Magpies, and to their credit they rallied strongly, adding 5.3 to 2.2 over the remainder of the term to be back within striking distance at the last change. Port rover Bob Quinn was in everything at this stage, to be

⁴² From 'The Advertiser', and quoted in *ibid.*, page 60.

arguably the best player on the ground, while half back flanker Basil Bampton and wingman Bill Whicker were also prominent. The momentum had clearly shifted in favour of the Magpies, and it is easy to imagine most spectators at the ground, other than the most diehard of Glenelg fans, spending the three quarter time interval pondering the seeming inevitability of a Port comeback. Glenelg appeared to be on the back foot, and badly in need of a lift from the likes of 'Blue' Johnston and the roving trio of Roy Colyer, Arthur Link and Lance Leak.

THREE QUARTER TIME: Glenelg 15.10 (100); Port Adelaide 11.17 (83)

4th Quarter

The last quarter of the 1934 SANFL grand final was exhilaratingly memorable. Those anticipating a Port Adelaide comeback looked to be having their expectations fulfilled early on as the Magpies began the term with 2 quick goals to reduce their deficit to just 5 points. However, the Bays responded by raising both their intensity and their aggression levels, with rovers Colyer and Link in particular using their pace and guile to set up three quick scoring opportunities in succession for their team mates on the forward line. Unfortunately for Glenelg, only one of these opportunities was converted, but at 16.12 (108) to 13.17 (95) the impetus was clearly back in favour of the black and golds.

Port's response was decisive and telling. Jack Dermody, who had been in dashing form on the wing all afternoon, embarked on a sweeping run which he rounded off with a perfect pass to Jack Prideaux, who goaled. A behind to Port then reduced the margin to a single straight kick, which was supplied shortly afterwards by Bob Quinn to bring the scores level. It was the first time since the fifteen minute mark of the opening term that the Bays had not been in front.

Glenelg responded by sending 'Blue' Johnston to the goallfront, a move which paid off almost immediately when Archie Goldsworthy collected the ball near the centre of the

ground and, after twice exchanging handballs with team mates, kicked high towards full forward. Johnston, one out with a much smaller opponent in Murray Whitaker, took a towering mark and then kicked truly to put the Bays a straight kick in front once more.

Shortly afterwards, Glenelg's veteran full forward Jack Owens nabbed his third major to push the margin out to 12 points, but the Magpies responded almost immediately courtesy of another goal - his fifth - from Bob Quinn. Surely, now, Port would go on with things?



Clem Hill, who brought the curtain down on his 10 season, 130 game league career with this match.

Far from it. Playing like men possessed, the Bays kept the ball in their forward line for the remainder of the game, adding 3 further behinds to establish a 9 point final margin and earn a victory that was applauded by all South Australian football supporters - even, so some accounts of the match insist, those of a black and white persuasion.

FINAL SCORE: Glenelg 18.15 (123); Port Adelaide 14.18 (102)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Glenelg	5.4	10.8	15.10	18.15	123
Port Adelaide	2.4	6.13	11.17	16.18	114

BEST - Glenelg: Goldsworthy, Colyer, Link, Sallis, Johnson, Brock **Port Adelaide:** Dermody, Quinn, Hollingsworth, Whicker, Bampton

SCORERS - Glenelg: Goldsworthy 4; Colyer, Johnston, Owens 3; Bergin 2; Leak, Link, Percy **Port Adelaide:** Quinn 5; Hollingsworth 4, Prideaux 4; Hender 2; Reval

ATTENDANCE: 30,045 at the Adelaide Oval

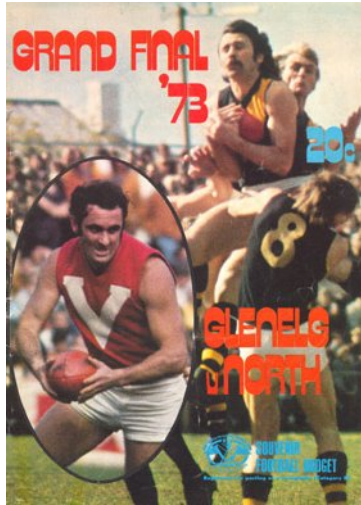
Postscript

The Bays' fall from grace would be even faster and more dramatic than their rise. In 1935, with more or less the same playing personnel at their disposal, they slumped to last place with just a solitary win from 17 games for the season. The remainder of the 1930s were scarcely better as only in 1936, when they finished 7th, did they avoid the wooden spoon.

The Magpies, by contrast, were on the verge of great things, as they would contest every remaining grand final of the 1930s, for wins in 1936, 1937 and 1939. Such players as Bob Quinn, Vic Johnson, Alan 'Bull' Reval, Albie Hollingsworth and Jack Dermody would have to rank with any in the club's illustrious history.

Over the remainder of the twentieth century, Port Adelaide would enjoy a substantial measure of revenge over its 1934 nemesis, winning grand finals against Glenelg in 1977, 1981, 1988, 1990 and 1992. Nevertheless, it is at least arguable that none of these subsequent grand finals captured the public imagination to quite the same extent as the Bays' sensational, unexpected and thoroughly unforgettable victory of '34.

A Fitting Swansong



1973 SANFL Grand Final: Glenelg vs. North Adelaide

After consecutive 6th place finishes in 1971 and 1972 Glenelg re-emerged as a force in 1973 with the best minor round performance in the club's history. The Tigers' only minor round defeat came in round 7 at Prospect Oval when reigning premiers and Australian club champions North Adelaide kicked away in the 2nd half after the teams had been level at half time to win 14.13 (97) to 8.22 (70). Eight weeks later in the return meeting between the sides at Glenelg, the Bays showed what a powerful side they were by not only gaining revenge, but registering the highest score kicked against North up to that time. Glenelg won 33.20 (218) to 8.10 (58), with teenage centre half forward Peter Carey booting 11 goals, and the likes of Graham Cornes, Peter Marker, Rex Voigt and John McFarlane running riot. Former West Torrens and state great Geoff Kingston, writing in 'The Advertiser', reckoned that "most of the spectators had never

seen anything like it - nor are they likely to see it again in a hurry. Glenelg was just something else!"⁴³

While Glenelg's 1971 and '72 performances had smacked mediocrity, grand final opponents North Adelaide had developed into one of the strongest teams in the land, winning flags in both years, as well as the aforementioned championship of Australia against Carlton. With triple Magarey Medallist Barrie Robran in consistently superb form, the Roosters oozed panache and class. Not that they were a one man team: veteran full back Bob Hammond, livewire rovers Geoff Marsh and Terry Von Bertouch, and utilities like John Phillips, Barry Stringer and John Robinson ensured that the side was well served on every line, while Victorian coach Mike Patterson had instilled a touch of steel, previously lacking in the side's make-up, to transform them from the 'nearly men' of the mid to late 1960s to South Australian football's pre-eminent force, not only of the early 1970s, but in the view of some of all time.

The South Australian National Football League expanded its finals series to include a 5th team in 1973, following the example of the Victorian Football League which had pioneered the innovation a season earlier. Along with minor premiers Glenelg (Won 21 Lost 1) the inaugural 'final five' was made up of Sturt (17-1), North Adelaide (16-5), Port Adelaide (11-10) and Norwood, which qualified ahead of Central District only on percentage (10-11). In addition to the usual finals venue of Adelaide Oval, some of the finals matches took place at Norwood Oval, where home team the Redlegs ousted Port Adelaide from contention in the first ever SANFL elimination final by 6 goals. Sturt meanwhile defeated North Adelaide in the qualifying final at Adelaide Oval to set up a 2nd semi final clash with Glenelg which the Bays won easily, although coach Neil Kerley felt that their level of attack on the ball left something to be desired.⁴⁴ North Adelaide, meanwhile, triumphed over Norwood at the Parade

⁴³ 'The Advertiser', Monday 23 July 1973.

⁴⁴ *Knuckles - the Neil Kerley Story* by Jim Rosevear, page 129.

in a close, hard fought game to set up a preliminary final re-match with the Double Blues.



Glenelg's Peter Carey, pictured during the 1973 grand final.

The 1973 preliminary final between North Adelaide and Sturt was one of those wholly inexplicable, utterly unpredictable encounters that come along every once in a while in almost all sports. The Blues, having won all 3 meetings between the sides during the season, were narrowly favoured to win, but the Roosters not only overturned the odds, they did so in the most emphatic way imaginable, winning by 93 points, 25.18 (168) to 9.21 (75), leading many observers to regard them as a good chance to upset the hitherto seemingly invincible Tigers on grand final day.

The 1973 season saw another major innovation in the introduction of the centre diamond, which lasted for just one year before being replaced by the centre square. (The points of the diamond were directed towards both goals and both centre wing positions.) The ensuing reduction in congestion at centre bounces favoured skilful, running teams like North Adelaide and Glenelg, and helped make the 1973 SANFL grand final, in the words of former Essendon and Sturt strong man Wally May, who was a TV commentator for the big game, "the greatest grand final I have seen". Match umpire Murray Ducker was among many who later concurred with this assessment.⁴⁵ Given that it was to be the last grand final to be played at the picturesque Adelaide Oval until the ground was redeveloped some forty years later- the SANFL having procured its own, purpose-built stadium, Football Park, at West Lakes, which would be used to host grand finals from 1974 - it was, all things considered, a fitting swansong.

After winning the toss, North skipper Bob Hammond elects to kick to the southern end of the ground, which is favoured by a breeze reckoned by commentator Wally May to be worth "about 3 or 4 goals".

1st Quarter

20 secs After a cumbersome attempt to spoil by Wayne Phillis, Barrie Robran is awarded a free kick near the front point of the centre diamond and sends a high punt kick to

⁴⁵ Ibid, page 130.

within 20 metres of goal where brother Rodney marks uncontested, all other players having seemingly lost the flight of the ball in transit. Robran's kick for goal splits the centre for his 45th major of the season. **North Adelaide 1.0; Glenelg 0.0**

8 mins Glenelg's South Broken Hill recruit Stephen Hywood, whose right knee is heavily strapped, takes a free kick for out of bounds on the full on right centre wing, and propels the ball some 40 metres directly forward where it comes off hands to Carey, who quickly off loads to Wickens. Under intense pressure, the promising Bay teenager's flaccid looking left foot kick only travels forward some 15 metres but then deceives onrushing North defender Bob Hammond by bouncing high over his head straight into the hands of 'Fred' Phillis. Spotting Rex Voigt, unmarked, running in towards goal, Phillis spears out a handball in that player's direction, which Voigt, without breaking stride, smoothly collects before calmly registering his 57th goal of the year. **Glenelg 1.2; North Adelaide 1.1**

9 mins Millard's centre clearance sails towards Glenelg's left forward pocket where 'Fred' Phillis and Bob Hammond contest the ball in the air. The Tiger spearhead has better position, and manages to bring the ball to ground just in front of himself before collecting. Meanwhile 'Twiggy' Caldwell runs in and interposes himself between Hammond and Phillis, allowing the latter time to spin 'round and send a high left foot kick over his shoulder towards the front of the goal square where the inevitable pack of players has formed in anticipation. Running in towards goal, Bay rover Greg Bennett fortuitously finds himself in the perfect position to snatch up the ball as it tumbles off hands to the rear of the pack. With no opposition player within 5 metres of him, the former Perth premiership player has ample time to steady and blast home from near point blank range. **Glenelg 2.2; North Adelaide 1.1**

12 mins Peter Carey is awarded a free kick after his direct opponent Neil Sachse is adjudged to have struck the Bay centre half forward high during a marking contest. From a

distance of 35 metres on a 45 degree angle to the left of goal, he effortlessly steers the ball home. **Glenelg 3.2; North Adelaide 1.3**

19 mins Marsh collects the ball at half back left for North and thumps a high kick towards the left half forward flank area where Plummer and Hywood engage in an aerial contest which sees Plummer tap the ball over his own head towards the North goal. Swinging 'round, Plummer runs after his own tap, dives on the ball, and in the face of strenuous pressure manages to off load by hand to Payne, who is running through perfectly. From a distance of some 40 metres the ex-Essendon big man's kick is perfectly weighted and sails through the centre for the Roosters' 2nd major of the match.

Glenelg 3.2; North Adelaide 2.5

21 mins Hammond's booming kick in after a Glenelg behind travels almost to the centre of the ground where a pack forms. Peter Carey manages to get a fist to the ball and it is collected at the front of the pack by Graham Cornes, who handballs back to the now running Carey. Carey in turn finds Kerry Hamilton, whose low kick travels barely 10 metres before being marked, centimetres above the turf, by a diving Rex Voigt. Despite being a good 60 metres from goal, Voigt lines up as though he means business, and his powerful right foot flat punt has 'full points' written all over it from the moment it leaves his boot. **Glenelg 4.3; North Adelaide 2.5**

22 mins North effect the quick reply in classically simple fashion as Plummer's centre clearance reaches centre half forward, where the ball bounces high and is collected by Marsh, who is amazed to find himself a good 5 metres clear of his nearest opponent. Swinging around onto his left foot he snaps truly to bring the Roosters to within less than a kick.

Glenelg 4.3; North Adelaide 3.5

27 mins Tregenza spills a mark near the centre of the ground but quickly recovers to gather the ball and handball towards right centre wing in the direction of Bennett. Burns, however, anticipates superbly, and runs in to intercept the ball before steering a low pass in the direction of Denis Sachse at centre half forward. The close attentions of Glenelg full back

and Rooster Peter Anderson mean that Sachse is unable to get the ball under control, however, and it spins off his hands in a goalward direction, fortuitously landing right in the path of Charlie Payne who has no trouble in steering through his 2nd of the match from a distance of less than 20 metres. **North Adelaide 4.5; Glenelg 4.3**

28 mins Robran, who has been uncharacteristically quiet, fields the ensuing centre tap and, after sprinting to the front point of the centre diamond, launches into a prodigious right foot torpedo punt which sails through for the most spectacular goal of the match so far. **North Adelaide 5.5; Glenelg 4.3**

29 mins Wickens tries to evade Burns at half forward right but is solidly tackled by the experienced North defender, who promptly receives a free kick for holding the ball. Burns' kick reaches half forward right where it comes off hands to Marsh, who just manages to get boot to ball before being flung to the ground. Luckily for North, Marsh's kick travels straight down Terry Von Bertouch's throat, and from 40 metres out on the slightest of angles the South Australian state rover has no trouble in converting. **North Adelaide 6.5; Glenelg 4.3**

31 mins Payne and Tregenza engage in a ruck contest at half forward left for North which results in the latter being 'pinged' for over the shoulder. Payne attempts to go the distance with a spiral punt but it spins off the side of his boot. Fortunately again, however, the ball travels straight to a team mate in Marsh, whose carefully measured shot never looks like missing. **North Adelaide 7.6; Glenelg 4.3**

As Bob Hammond comes careering out of the goal square to gather up the ball and clear with a low, raking drop kick, the siren sounds bringing to an end a quarter of football which has seen 9 minutes of 'time on' added. Glenelg barrackers will be disappointed to have seen their side's early dominance overhauled by a Roosters team playing fast, systematic, aggressive football of the sort that brought them both the 1971 and '72 premierships, as well as the 1972 championship of Australia. A key to North's overall supremacy in the opening term was its winning 'centre

diamond' combination which was responsible for 10 of the 12 centre clearances effected during the quarter.

QUARTER TIME: North Adelaide 7.6 (48); Glenelg 4.3 (27)

2nd Quarter

4 mins In a move which will prove highly significant in the overall context of the game, Glenelg coach Neil Kerley replaces the injured Tardif with Sandland.



Freddy Phillis

5 mins Wayne Phillis' left foot clearing kick from half back left travels almost to half forward left and is tapped to ground by Marker, right into the path of the running Bennett who sends a high, looping handball some 15 metres forward to Caldwell. With his back to goal, Caldwell feeds off to the goal-bound Hamilton, who pirouettes around Neil Sachse before handballing to Voigt, who has found space 30 metres from goal directly in front. Taking his time and with great deliberation, Voigt pierces the centre of the goals with a low, stabbing drop punt. **North Adelaide 7.6; Glenelg 5.5**

8 mins Marsh clears the ball for North Adelaide from half back left. The ball travels towards the centre of the ground

where Bay defender Hywood dashes in and marks on his chest. Handballing to McFarlane, Hywood runs on and collects a quick return before pumping the ball high towards the goal square. A split second later, Burns runs in and sends Hywood clattering to the ground, whereupon umpire Ducker awards a free after disposal to Hywood's team mate, Peter Carey. From a starting position deep in the left forward pocket, Carey runs in field to narrow the angle and kicks truly.

North Adelaide 7.6; Glenelg 6.5

20 mins Marsh on left centre wing for North sends a left foot kick forward some 40 metres, only to see Bay half back flanker Colbey win the race to collect the ball. Hotly pressed by Rodney Robran, the 1969 All Australian just manages to get boot to ball before being flung to the ground. Fortunately for Glenelg, the ball travels straight as a die in the direction of Sandland at centre half forward, who is able to mark uncontested. From a distance of 45 metres from goal on a 45 degree angle, Sandland's 3rd kick of the game since coming onto the ground elicits 2 flags from the goal umpire to level the scores. **Glenelg 7.8; North Adelaide 7.8**

21 mins From the ensuing centre bounce, John Spry collects his own ruck tap and sends an ungainly looking tumble punt some 20 metres goal ward where it is intercepted by Wayne Phillis. Throwing the ball immediately onto his boot, Phillis finds Bennett in the centre of the ground, who in turn pinpoints Carey at the true centre half forward position. Carey, who has probably been the dominant player on the ground to date, makes light of his task by effortlessly splitting the centre to regain the lead for his side. **Glenelg 8.8; North Adelaide 7.8**

22 mins North manufacture an immediate response as Marsh fields Spry's hit out from the ensuing centre bounce and kicks high towards centre half forward. In a pack of 4 players, Rooster spearhead Dennis Sachse uses his body adroitly to ensure he has best position, and takes a solid mark. His flat punt shot for goal looks untidy but does the business. **Glenelg 8.8; North Adelaide 8.8**

23 mins Sandland restores Glenelg's lead with a minor score. **Glenelg 8.9; North Adelaide 8.8**

27 mins Carey marks a pass from Colbey 15 metres ahead of the centre circle and most spectators are probably surprised to see him lining up a shot for goal. Reinforcing his reputation as one of the most exciting young talents in the game, however, Carey's towering 70 metre torpedo punt comfortably avoids the flailing hands of the goal line pack to register full points. **Glenelg 9.10; North Adelaide 8.9**



"The King"

The Roosters add one further behind to their tally before the siren sounds a minute and a half later, bringing to an end an absorbing quarter of football which has left the outcome of the game very much in the balance.

HALF TIME: Glenelg 9.10 (64); North Adelaide 8.10 (58)

3rd Quarter

30 secs Glenelg effect a copybook centre clearance which culminates in Hamilton's bullet-like pass finding Carey at centre half forward, and many members of the crowd probably have a '1' next to the Bay big man's name in their Budgets even before the inevitable goal (Carey's 5th of the game) is kicked. **Glenelg 10.10; North Adelaide 8.10**

3 mins John McFarlane, who is gradually coming into the game after a quiet first half, marks the ball at right centre wing and is awarded a 15 metre penalty after Plummer oversteps the mark. McFarlane's kick to half forward right is met by a fast moving Kerry Hamilton who spears the ball in field toward Sandland, who gathers on the first bounce and kicks high towards the goal square. Amazingly, there is no one home for North, and Rex Voigt is able to mark uncontested on the chest, a bare 15 metres from goal on the slightest of angles. He effortlessly steers it through and the Bays have some valuable breathing space. **Glenelg 11.10; North Adelaide 8.11**

5 mins Running back in the direction of the Glenelg goal, Terry Von Bertouch gathers up the ball near the boundary at half back left, wheels around onto his right foot, and clears towards the centre circle where stringer is in prime position to mark. Playing on quickly, Stringer kicks towards centre half forward, finding Rodney Robran, who skirts around Colbey's attempted tackle and gets boot to ball centimetres shy of Hywood's desperate lunge. The kick is true, and the Roosters have given notice that they have no intention of succumbing meekly to the Bay steamroller. **Glenelg 11.10; North Adelaide 9.11**

As the ball is ferried back to the centre of the ground by the boundary umpire, North half forward Phillips, who took a heavy knock late in the 2nd term, is replaced by Adrian Rebbeck.

7 mins Wayne Phillis stampedes through the centre of the ground, leaving opponents and team mates alike in his wake, before snatching up the ball and feeding off by hand to Hamilton. The Bay centreman is flattened moments after getting his kick away and the umpire awards a relayed free kick to Sandland in the left forward pocket. Sandland, who has replaced 'Fred' Phillis at full forward, with the 1969 Magarey Medallist moving into a forward pocket, converts easily. **Glenelg 12.10; North Adelaide 9.11**

9 mins Hywood meets the ball strongly at centre half back and looks for Carey at centre half forward, who is too strong yet again for Neil Sachse, and marks strongly. Playing on right away, Carey handballs to the running Wickens who has time to take a bounce before bisecting the uprights with a low, punching kick. **Glenelg 13.10; North Adelaide 9.11**

10 mins Plummer fields Spry's centre tap and launches a high kick in the direction of centre half forward where North's burly full forward Dennis Sachse maneuvers himself in front of Peter Anderson and manages to knock the ball to ground. Showing a surprising turn of pace, Sachse then tears after the ball and, aided by a misjudgement from Tregenza, who allows the ball to bounce past him, is able to gather it up and fire home from 20 metres, with Anderson nowhere in sight. **Glenelg 13.10; North Adelaide 10.11**

Moments later, Charlie Payne squanders an excellent opportunity to maintain the Roosters' momentum when, from 25 metres out almost directly in front, under no perceptible pressure, he misses everything, sending the ball out of bounds on the full in the right forward pocket.

12 mins Anderson's kick in after a North behind is marked at half forward right by Stringer who, as he falls to his knees, handballs to his left to Plummer, who from a distance of 40 metres on no appreciable angle makes no mistake. **Glenelg 13.10; North Adelaide 11.12**

14 mins As the North Adelaide players continue to out-hustle and out-pace their opponents, Stringer overtakes Hywood at centre half forward and, while shepherding that player, knocks the ball on into the path of Plummer. Plummer runs onto the ball, collects it, and from deep in the right forward pocket steers it through for a superb angled goal. **Glenelg 13.10; North Adelaide 12.12**

17 mins Hamilton marks comfortably on his chest near the rear point of the centre diamond and casually prods out a high kick towards left centre wing. Running with the flight of the ball, Colbey marks on his chest and immediately sends a high, looping handball some 15 metres forward to Cornes, who returns it to Colbey on the 'one-two'. Dashing on, Colbey steadies and finds Sandland at centre half forward with a low, stabbing drop punt. Sandland, who is comprehensively out-pointing the experienced Bob Hammond at this stage, makes no mistake from 45 metres out directly in front. **Glenelg 14.10; North Adelaide 12.13**

27 mins Neil Sachse meets Wayne Phillis' clearing kick on right centre wing and skips 'round Peter Marker's attempted tackle before firing the ball back towards centre half forward where Sporn leaps high to thump the ball aggressively back over his head towards the North goal. Dennis Sachse dashes out from the goal front ahead of Peter Anderson, gathers up the ball, and spears a left handed handball across his body to Rebbeck whose left foot snap from 30 metres out, straight in front, bounces over the goal line to bring the Roosters back to within 2 points. Moments earlier, Rebbeck, under fierce opposition pressure, had fumbled the ball just outside the goal square, allowing the Tigers to clear; his sense of relief as he trots back to his position after making amends is palpable. **Glenelg 14.10; North Adelaide 13.14**

29 mins Dennis Sachse and Hywood wrestle for possession just outside the North Adelaide goal square and the umpire steps in and declares "that's mine". Sachse duly lobs the ball across to the umpire, whereupon Hywood playfully ruffles the big fella's hair. Sachse looks momentarily nonplussed, but has no time to conceive an appropriate

retaliatory gesture as umpire Ducker bounces the ball, and Sachse is forced to contest the hit-out. Standing rooted to the spot, Sachse proves too strong for any of the North players, and deftly taps the ball to Von Bertouch, who sprints into the clear and kicks truly from near point blank range. **North Adelaide 14.14; Glenelg 14.10**

31 mins Umpire Ducker bounces the ball at centre half forward for Glenelg, and Spry out-jumps Carey to punch the ball away towards left centre wing. Hamilton, however, is first to reach it, and his calculated left foot kick finds a fast leading Rex Voigt some 30 metres from goal on a negligible angle. The man nicknamed 'Noddy' by team mates and fans brings up his 5th major of the afternoon with no trouble whatsoever. **Glenelg 15.10; North Adelaide 14.14**

33 mins Wickens in the centre of the ground kicks in the direction of McFarlane at half forward right. Unable to hold onto the mark, McFarlane nevertheless keeps the ball under control as he taps it ahead of himself before finally picking it up just inside the boundary. Showing great awareness, he hooks the ball back in field over his head to Rex Voigt, who has no difficulty marking on his chest 40 metres from goal on a 45 degree angle. The ensuing goal is Voigt's 62nd of the season. **Glenelg 16.10; North Adelaide 14.14**

The siren sounds moments later with the ball near the centre wing boundary in front of the temporary stand.

THREE QUARTER TIME: Glenelg 16.10 (106); North Adelaide 14.14 (98)

4th Quarter

2 mins After being held when not in possession of the ball by John Sandland, John Robinson takes a free kick from just inside the boundary, deep in the left back pocket. His kick sails towards the left half back flank area where a large pack forms, and Graham Cornes, rising a good metre or more off the ground, gets both hands to the ball but is unable to hold onto it. After returning to earth, however, Cornes finds himself

in pole position to snatch up the ball, and is just able to squeeze out a left foot grubber before being tackled. The kick travels 10 metres forward and is met by Rex Voigt, who spins around onto his left foot and nonchalantly snaps his 7th major of the game. **Glenelg 17.10; North Adelaide 14.14**



Glenelg captain Peter Marker, finding himself confronted by North's Barrie Robran, looks to off load a handball during the tumultuous finale to the match.

5 mins Five metres clear of his nearest opponent Barrie Robran picks up the ball near the front point of the centre

diamond and has plenty of time to look up and measure his options before finding Adrian Rebbeck with a pinpoint drop punt pass midway between half forward right and the right forward pocket. Rebbeck appears to play on by running forwards some 6 or 7 metres, only to stop when confronted by Bay defender Rawson. Umpire Ducker, however, decides to give Rebbeck the benefit of the doubt by allowing him to go back and take his kick, with which he gratefully and gleefully splits the centre. **Glenelg 17.10; North Adelaide 15.14**

5 mins Within 10 seconds of the re-start the Bays have restored their 14 point advantage as Cornes, having sharked Sporn's centre tap, unleashes a hefty torpedo punt which travels deep into the right forward pocket. Rex Voigt runs after and collects the ball and, as he crashes into Rooster back pocket John Robinson, off loads a handball over his head to 'Fred' Phillis, who immediately relays it to Peter Carey. Running into the goal square Carey just manages to prod the ball home despite a despairing lunge from Spry. **Glenelg 18.10; North Adelaide 15.14**

8 mins Barrie Robran marks strongly at half back left and steers the ball elegantly towards the centre of the ground where Marsh has found space, and marks. Marsh's 30 metre left foot kick hits Stringer on the chest near the front point of the centre diamond, and Stringer off loads towards a pack of players at centre half forward in the midst of which Rodney Robran, showing great courage as well as superb anticipation, gets high off the ground to hang on to a robust mark. Robran's kick arrives in the goal square at markable height, but the stolid figure of Dennis Sachse provides an impenetrable barrier for 2 Glenelg defenders in the shape of Colbey and Rawson, and the ball sails through for a goal. **Glenelg 18.11; North Adelaide 16.14**

15 mins Tardif, having marked on left centre wing, sends a high, booming torpedo punt into the right forward pocket where the ball tumbles off hands to Spry, whose attempted clearance is smothered by Hamilton. Sprinting after the ball, Hamilton reaches it a split second ahead of Spry, and as he stoops to gather it up the former Claremont ruckman pushes

him in the back to concede an obvious free kick. From a distance of less than 20 metres out almost directly in front, Hamilton is never going to miss. **Glenelg 19.11; North Adelaide 16.14**

16 mins The ensuing centre bounce by Ducker evades both teams' ruckmen and the ball is thumped forward by Barrie Robran, right into the path of John Plummer. Plummer's centre clearance is marked on the chest at centre half forward by Adrian Rebbeck after Dennis Sachse had done just enough to keep Colbey out of the contest without conceding a free kick. Rebbeck duly nabs his 4th goal of the game, making him North's top scorer. **Glenelg 19.11; North Adelaide 17.14**

20 mins After several minutes of sustained North Adelaide pressure Glenelg break away in a swift move which culminates in Rex Voigt's goal bound kick being shepherded over the line, à la Dennis Sachse, by 'Fred' Phillis. The umpire, however, rules that Phillis' endeavours were illegal, and awards a free kick to his opponent, Bob Hammond.

23 mins After taking a typically resolute mark 25 metres from goal directly in front, North full forward Dennis Sachse registers his 105th goal of the season to bring the Roosters to within a point. **Glenelg 19.11; North Adelaide 18.16**

29 mins Rebbeck's kick from left centre wing eludes a pack of players and bounces straight into the path of Barrie Robran near the front point of the diamond. Robran's high left foot kick travels almost to the goal square and is marked by Plummer who, despite apparently suffering from cramp, has no difficulty in giving the Roosters the lead for the first time since the equivalent stage of the 3rd quarter. As Plummer marks, the North Adelaide coaching bench explodes in a tumult of delight, with coach Mike Patterson leaping to his feet and raising his hands to the skies in a mixture of jubilation and obeisance. He then runs to the boundary and can be seen gesticulating urgently towards his players, presumably urging them to retain their focus and dig deep for one final, match-winning effort. **North Adelaide 19.16; Glenelg 19.11**

32 mins After 3 minutes of tense, exhilarating, end to end action, it is the Tigers' turn to attack, but their thrust deep into the right forward pocket is repelled by Bob Hammond, easily the best player on view in this final term, who knocks the ball ahead of himself towards the boundary line, only to overrun it at the last moment, allowing a scrum to form. Moments later the ball pops out to Marriott, whose hurried over the shoulder kick floats high in the direction of the right point post where Graham Cornes, who has scarcely been sighted all afternoon, soars high over the pack to take an acrobatic mark. With commentator Wally May opining that "any player who takes a mark like that is never going to miss the goal", Cornes duly steers the ball home, eliciting an ecstatic roar from the Tiger faithful, who have been waiting 39 years since their last senior flag. Cornes himself, however, trots casually back to his position as though taking stellar marks and kicking grand final winning goals are everyday occurrences. Either that, or he is too stunned to react. **Glenelg 20.11; North Adelaide 19.16**

34 mins For the remaining 90 seconds or so of the match, Glenelg successfully play 'keepings off', culminating in a long, speculative kick from half forward left towards the goal square by Wayne Phillis, which is marked unchallenged by John Sandland. As Sandland steadies to take his kick, the final siren sounds and, amidst the inevitable eruption of celebratory acclaim, it seems scarcely anyone is watching as he casually steers his kick through the centre to make the final margin 7 points.

FINAL SCORE: Glenelg 21.11 (137); North Adelaide 19.16 (130)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Glenelg	4.3	9.10	16.10	21.11	137
North Adelaide	7.6	8.10	14.14	19.16	130

BEST - Glenelg: Carey, Hamilton, Tregenza, Voigt, Anderson, Colbey, W.Phillis **North Adelaide:** Hammond, Marsh, Howard, Sporn, Robinson, Stringer, Von Bertouch

SCORERS - Glenelg: Voigt 7.1; Carey 6.1; Sandland 4.3; Wickens 1.2; Bennett, Cornes, Hamilton 1.0; Caldwell 0.2; Marker 0.1; rushed 0.1 **North Adelaide:** Rebbeck 4.1; D.Sachse 3.3; R.Robran 3.1; Marsh 2.2; Plummer 2.1; Payne, Von Bertouch 2.0; B.Robran 1.2; Stringer 0.3; Hearl 0.2; rushed 0.1

ATTENDANCE: 56,525 at the Adelaide Oval

Postscript

The longest grand final in SANFL history (it included 34 minutes and 55 seconds of time-on) has also been arguably the greatest. It was also arguably a game which genuinely warranted the over-used expression "neither side deserved to lose".

The fortunes of the 2 competing clubs after the 1973 grand final were, inevitably, vastly different. Glenelg retained a position of some prominence for the following 2 decades, only to garner an unfortunate reputation for 'freezing' on the big occasion. This is exemplified by its record of losing 9 of the 11 grand finals in which it competed between 1973 and 1992. Only in 1985 and 1986 (both times against North Adelaide) were the Bays successful.

North, by contrast, fell on hard times. The unfortunate injury sustained by Barrie Robran while playing for South Australia against the VFL at Sydney in 1974 deprived the team of both its inspiration and its primary playmaker, not to mention the game of football itself of one of the most prodigious talents ever seen. The gradual retirement of other key players over the next 2 to 3 seasons also weakened the side, as they were not immediately replaced.

The Roosters came to the fore again under Mike Nunan during the 1980s when, playing an exhilarating brand

of attacking football, they contested 4 grand finals between 1985 and 1989, albeit for just 1 win (in 1987). A further premiership followed in 1991.

Many of the key figures in the 1973 grand final went on to make noteworthy additions to their curriculum vitae. North full back Bob Hammond coached Norwood to flags in 1975 and 1978, and was later General Manager of the Adelaide Football Club. Match winner Graham Cornes later worked with Hammond at Adelaide as that club's inaugural coach, having earlier won the 1980 Tassie Medal, and masterminded Glenelg's regular assaults on the premiership between 1985 and 1990. Neil Kerley continued to coach with verve, determination and intermittent success at Glenelg, West Torrens, West Adelaide and Central District, before carving out a career for himself in the media. Undoubtedly the saddest tale, however, attaches to North defender Neil Sachse. After transferring to VFL side Footscray in 1975, Sachse sustained a serious neck injury in a trial game and was rendered quadriplegic, a stark reminder that, along with the glamour, excitement, occasional majesty and allure, football sometimes requires a heavy price of its participants.

On Saturday 29 September 1973 at approximately eight minutes past five, however, it was all worth it for thousands of success starved supporters of the Glenelg Football Club.

KENSINGTON

Home Ground: Kensington Oval

Formed: Early 1870s - precise date uncertain, although a set of minutes exists for the club's 1872 AGM

Colours: Scarlet and white

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

Despite its fleeting existence the Kensington Football Club played a significant role in bringing organised football to South Australia. Formed early in the 1870s, perhaps as early as 1870, the club was unusually well administered for its time, and even boasted its own unique set of playing rules, which other clubs almost invariably found bewildering. Nevertheless, it was well aware of the advantages to be gleaned from uniformity of practice, and as early as 1873 proposed that "The Adelaide, Port Adelaide and suburban clubs (draw) up a standard code of rules for play and that a committee be appointed to carry the proposition into effect".⁴⁶

Saturday 10th July 1875 saw the official opening of the club's new enclosed ground, Kensington Oval, which was to remain a venue of some importance in Adelaide for almost a century. To celebrate the opening, a match between Kensington and Adelaide took place, watched by a crowd of some 600 spectators, each having paid 6d for admittance. It is not recorded what rules were adopted, but teams comprised 22 players, and the lighter and more skilful Kensington side kicked the only goal of the game.

Kensington spent five somewhat inauspicious seasons in the SAFA, never finishing higher on the list than fifth.

Nevertheless, it was quite a popular and well supported club, and indeed for a time was able to field both first and second twenties, something which the ostensibly stronger Victorian and South Park clubs never managed.

Kensington's final season saw it embark on a merger arrangement with Adelaide which was a prelude to both clubs disappearing, in Kensington's case for good. (Adelaide would later re-emerge, albeit briefly.)

During the twentieth century two further clubs bearing the Kensington name emerged, one for a single season in 1912, and the other between 1925 and 1935. The first club competed in the Adelaide and Suburban Football Association,

⁴⁶ 'The Register', 6/5/1873.

while the second spent the period from 1925 to 1932 in the East Torrens competition, and its last three seasons as a member of the South Australian Amateur Football League. This second Kensington combination, which for most of its existence played its home matches at the Victoria Park Racecourse, was quite successful. It won an A2 premiership in its first season in the amateurs, and came third in A1 the following year. Only in its final season, when it had difficulty recruiting players, did it struggle, finishing bottom of the A1 ladder with just 1 win from 14 games. The player recruitment problem was so severe, however, that the club was forced to disband at the end of the 1935 season.

NORTH ADELAIDE **(Hotham)**

Formed: 1881 as Hotham; altered name to North Adelaide in 1888; assimilated by Adelaide 1889

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

Hotham Football Club is believed to have been formed in 1881. Six years later the club was accorded senior status in the SAFA, along with Gawler and West Adelaide.

Hotham finished fifth out of seven clubs in its debut season. At a meeting held in March 1888 it was agreed to combine forces with a local junior club, Ariel, and to compete under the name North Adelaide. The club again ran fifth out of seven in 1888, and a couple of months prior to the start of the 1889 season there were proposals to amalgamate with SAFA newcomers Medindie, which had finished last in its debut season of 1888.

However, at the eleventh hour a completely different arrangement was brokered involving an ostensible merger with Adelaide, although this was probably better described as a takeover in that the merged club retained Adelaide's name and colours.

NORTH ADELAIDE (Medindie)

Club Address: PO Box 194, Prospect 5082, South Australia

Website: <http://www.nafc.com.au/>

Home Ground: Prospect Oval

Formed: 1881 as Medindie; renamed North Adelaide in 1893

Colours: Red and white

Emblem: Rooster

Senior Grade Premierships: 1900, 1902, 1905, 1920, 1930-31, 1949, 1952, 1960, 1971-72, 1987, 1991 (13 total)

Other Premierships: Championship of Australia 1972; Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy 1966-67, 1971-72, 2005-6 (6 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1968 (1 total)

Magarey Medallists: Phil Sandland 1901; Tom Mackenzie 1905 & 1906; Tom Leahy 1913; Harold 'Dribbler' Hawke 1937; Jeff Pash 1939; H.Ron Phillips 1948 & 1949; Ian McKay 1950; Barrie Barbary 1960; Don Lindner 1967*; Barrie Robran 1968, 1970 & 1973; Tony Antrobus 1983; Andrew Jarman 1987; Brenton Phillips 1993; Josh Francou 1996; James Allan 2007, 2010 & 2011; Rhys Archard 2009 (16 Medallists/22 Medals)

All Australians: Haydn Bunton 1956; Don Lindner 1961; Andrew Jarman 1986 & 1987 (4 total)

League Top Goalkickers: A.Daly (54) 1903 & (30) 1905; P.Lewis (58) 1923; K.Farmer (105) 1930, (126) 1931, (102) 1932, (112) 1933, (106) 1934, (128) 1935, (134) 1936, (108) 1937, (112) 1938, (113) 1939 & (123) 1940; W.McKenzie (67) 1954; D.Sachse (90) 1967; J.Roberts (111) 1987; D.Hargraves (68) 2002 (18 total)

Highest Score: 34.22 (226) vs. South Adelaide 6.12 (48) at Adelaide Oval in round 5 1972

Most Games: 389 by Michael Redden from 1978 to 1992

Record Home Attendance: 19,120 in round 5 1958: Port Adelaide 14.14 (98); North Adelaide 8.10 (58)

Record Finals Attendance: 56,525 for 1973 grand final at Adelaide Oval: Glenelg 21.11 (137); North Adelaide 19.16 (130)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by SANFL in 1998*

The date: Sunday 15 October 1972. The place: Adelaide Oval. The occasion: the Australian Premiers Final between North Adelaide (SANFL premiers) and Carlton (VFL premiers). 23,213 spectators screamed themselves hoarse as the Roosters, having trailed by 5 points at the last change, and despite coming home into the breeze, applied Victorian style pressure to their opponents during a torrid final quarter to emerge victors by the narrowest of margins and claim the title 'Champions of Australia'. North champion Barrie Robran gave an irrepressible display which in some ways was the pinnacle of his career, and gave rise to an unprecedented tribute from quintessentially one-eyed Victorian TV commentator, Louie 'the Lip' Richards, who dubbed Robran "the new king of football."⁴⁷

The whole North Adelaide team were 'kings of football' that day, and it is arguable that South Australian football itself has never achieved a more noteworthy triumph. Certainly, whatever else is said, it was the North Adelaide

⁴⁷ 'The Advertiser', 16/10/72, page 17.

Football Club's finest hour, albeit that subsequent developments in the game would render it almost meaningless.

Football in the northern districts of Adelaide dates almost from the sport's inception in South Australia during the early 1860s. However, the club which would eventually go on to reach the absolute pinnacle of Australian football achievement in 1972 began life in 1881 as the Medindie Football Club. Known as 'The Dindies', Medindie was a foundation member in 1885 of the South Australian Junior Football Association, before spending the 1886 and 1887 seasons competing in the Adelaide and Suburban Football Association. The club then had an undistinguished five season career in the SAFA before altering its name to North Adelaide and adopting the now familiar red and white colours in 1893. The name change did nothing to improve the team's on field fortunes, however, in an era when South Adelaide, Norwood and Port Adelaide were very much the 'big three' of South Australian football.

As the turn of the century approached, however, there were indications that the gap between the top and bottom sides in the SAFA was narrowing, a state of affairs reinforced by the compulsory introduction of Electorate football in 1899.⁴⁸

In 1900 North Adelaide broke through to secure a first ever premiership, defeating warm favourites South Adelaide in the final, 4.3 (27) to 1.8 (14). The red and whites were to remain a force for the next six seasons, collecting further premierships in 1902 and 1905 and narrowly failing against Port Adelaide in the challenge final of 1906 after earlier thrashing the same side in a semi final, 5.4 (34) to 0.12 (12).

North were ably served during this period by 1901 Magarey Medal winning centreman Phil Sandland, pacy defender Norm Clark (who went on to have an illustrious career with Carlton as both player and coach), wingmen Jack

⁴⁸ As the name implies, Electorate football meant that players were obliged to represent the club in whose electoral district they resided.

Rees and Norman Pash, and much-travelled ruckman/defender Jack 'Dinnie' Reedman, who captained the red and whites between 1901 and 1905.

In a pattern which was to become monotonously familiar in future, North's fortunes faded somewhat during the second half of the decade, before a gradual resurgence in the years leading up to the onset of World War One culminating in successive final defeats against Port Adelaide in 1913 and 1914. The latter of these was by the extravagant margin for the time of 79 points; even more ignominiously, North's total for the day was a mere 1.8 (14) - a scoreline which would come back to haunt the club some three quarters of a century later.

The SAFL went into recess between 1916 and 1918 because of the war, but the return of football in 1919 was to prove quite sensational, with North Adelaide very much in the thick of the action. After finishing in third place after the home and away rounds the Northerners faced minor premiers Sturt in the first semi final and recorded a convincing win, 7.18 (60) to 3.5 (23). The final pitted North against West Torrens, and in one of the most dour matches imaginable the two sides played out the Australian football equivalent of a scoreless draw in soccer, totalling just 2.3 (15) apiece. The replay was again a tightly contested affair, but this time the red and whites ultimately managed to keep their noses in front by 5 points, 6.2 (38) to 5.3 (33).

Twenty-six scoring shots in four hours of football represents a score every nine minutes or so - not, on the face of it, crowd-pleasing stuff. However, there are different forms of excitement in football, and spectators at the SAFL finals series of 1919 certainly got more than their money's worth in terms of heart-stopping, close to the wire action

The thrills continued in the challenge final, in which North met Sturt once more. Incredibly, the result was another stalemate, with both sides registering 5.9 (39). For the first and only time in the history of football in the three major footballing states two finals matches in the same series had been drawn. A week later in the challenge final replay yet

another draw appeared on the cards at times, but in the end the debilitating effects of five hard finals matches probably proved North's undoing, and they went down by 5 points, 2.6 (18) to 3.5 (23).



Action from Prospect Oval in 1927. North's Jim McDowall (no. 19) contests with Wilson of Norwood in a game which North won comfortably. The red and whites lost the challenge final that year to minor premiers West Adelaide.

It did not take long for the team to find its way to the winner's rostrum, however. After finishing the 1920 home and away series as minor premiers North comfortably accounted for West Torrens in the first semi final before trouncing Norwood 9.15 (69) to 3.3 (21) in the final in front of a then record 31,000 spectators.

Earlier in the season the club had embarked on a two match tour of the eastern states during which a 13.15 (93) to 9.11 (65) win had been recorded against New South Wales,

and a 7.15 (57) to 9.6 (60) loss sustained at the hands of a powerful Ballarat Football League combination.⁴⁹

Despite having accumulated the respectable total of thirteen senior grade premierships North have never really managed to establish themselves as the competition's outstanding side over a prolonged period of time. All too frequently the team has fought tooth and nail for several seasons to reach the top, only to nose dive spectacularly back to anonymity almost before the fizz has gone from the premiership champagne. North of 1921 were as ordinary as their predecessors of the year before had been outstanding, and they failed even to make the finals. During the remainder of the decade, despite reaching the premiership play off on three occasions (in 1923, 1926 and 1927) the side proved unable to clinch another flag.

Prominent players for North during the 1920s included Tom Leahy, nicknamed 'the prince of ruckmen', Percy Lewis, Percy Furler, Albert Fooks, Cec Curnow and Darby Crawford.

Wishing no disrespect to any of these champions, however, a player was to make his debut in 1929 who was to go on to outshine them all; indeed, in the entire history of South Australian football it is doubtful whether there has been a more highly celebrated figure. Ken Farmer - later to be popularly referred to, in South Australia at any rate, as 'football's Bradman' - kicked 62 goals in 1929, a highly respectable total for the time, but, by the standards which he was shortly to establish, a comparatively modest one. In each of the following eleven seasons Farmer was to manage at least 100 goals a year, and when he retired at the end of the 1941 season he had amassed an Australian record (which still

⁴⁹ In those days the BFL was occasionally strong enough to overcome the might of the VFL in representative football, although the VFL, as has been its wont throughout its history, invariably had a convenient excuse to hand for such reversals.

stands) 1,419 goals in what was at that stage a South Australian record 224 games.⁵⁰

In 1930 Farmer gave the first sustained evidence of his rare talent, kicking 105 majors as North strode impressively to the premiership. A loss to Sturt in the first semi final proved to be nothing more than a minor hiccup. Exercising the right of challenge earned by winning the minor premiership North battled their way to a 4 point triumph over Port Adelaide in the challenge final before a crowd of 23,609. Farmer kicked 4.0 out of the victors' total of 9.13, and he was ably assisted on the day by the likes of Harold 'Dribbler' Hawke, Furler, Mangeldorf, Drew and Barrett. The finals series of 1930 was the last to be conducted under the challenge format, with the Page-McIntyre system replacing it the following year.

The change in finals format had no immediate effect on North's supremacy. Farmer bagged 126 goals in 1931 including 6 in the grand final as the red and whites swept all before them to take out consecutive premierships for the first ever time. Their victims on this occasion were Sturt, and the 38 point winning margin afforded clear evidence of their superiority.

Thereafter, however, the 1930s followed a similar pattern to the previous decade. North did manage to reach the grand final in 1932, losing to Sturt, but in the remaining years of the decade the best they could manage was 3rd place in 1936. Coincidentally, 1936 was also the year that Farmer kicked 134 goals to set a new SANFL record for the most goals kicked in a season, a record which was to endure until 1969.

⁵⁰ Farmer's original non-inclusion in the AFL's Hall of Fame, which was instigated in 1996, remains a footballing travesty, although it has to be conceded that the AFL has never demonstrated more than the most superficial knowledge of the game's history outside the state of Victoria in general, and the VFL in particular.



Ron Phillips, shown above receiving the first of his two successive Magarey Medals in 1948.

As the 1940s dawned North supporters could have been excused for licking their lips in anticipation given the red and whites' by now renowned habit of bursting out of the blocks at the start of decades, but on this occasion there was to be disappointment. North finished 6th in 1940 (despite 125 goals from Farmer,⁵¹ and then slumped to 7th in 1941 in what proved to be the goal kicking legend's last season.

Between 1942 and 1944 the SANFL competition was conducted on a scaled down war time basis with the eight clubs being paired off more or less geographically. North's partner during this period was Norwood, and despite winning only 17 out of its 43 matches the combine ultimately proved very successful, defeating Port Adelaide-West Torrens in the grand finals of both 1943 and 1944.

⁵¹ Included in this total was the SANFL single match record of 23.6 out of a team total of 26.11 against West Torrens on 6 July.



1950s action: Bill McKenzie takes a “ripper”.

On the resumption of full scale competition in 1945 the red and whites remained competitive, reaching the first semi final before losing to eventual premiers West Torrens in

controversial circumstances. With the score locked at 100 points apiece the bell rang to end the game, but umpire Aplin, failing to hear it, allowed play to continue, whereupon Torrens rover Jim Thoms kicked what proved to be the match-winning goal. North's post-match protests were in vain as the laws of football clearly state that play shall cease, not when the bell (or siren) sounds, but when "the field umpire signifies that he has heard it by sounding his whistle".

During the remaining years of the 1940s North looked to be experiencing their customary fade-out, failing to reach the finals between 1946 and 1948. However, in 1949 the club appointed Ken Farmer as senior coach and he proved to have an immediate and beneficial impact. The northerners finished minor premiers with 12 wins from 17 before annihilating Norwood to the tune of 73 points in the second semi, 23.14 (152) to 11.13 (79). The grand final against West Torrens was more closely contested, but North were never really in trouble and finally got home by 23 points, 13.17 (95) to 9.18 (72). Farmer's master stroke this year was restoring thirty-three year old former Magarey Medallist Jeff Pash to the senior side. Pash had spent the entire 1948 season in the Seconds, but in 1949 he held down centre throughout the year and was particularly prominent in the grand final.

Another key to North's success was the form of versatile champion Ron Phillips, who won the Magarey Medal in 1949 playing mainly as a centre half forward. In 1948, Phillips had also won the Medal, with most of his football that year being played at centre half back.

North's customary premiership hangover saw the side drop to 5th in 1950, but they were back as a force the following year when they featured in a pulsating grand final against Port Adelaide, which the Magpies finally won by 11 points, 10.12 (72) to 8.13 (61).



The great Don Lindner.

The team's valiant effort in 1951 had a discernible effect off the field as club membership rose to a record 1,700 the following year. On the field, too, there was progress, with the side winning 14 out of 17 matches to secure the minor

premiership, followed by a stirring 3 point victory over Port Adelaide in the second semi final.

The grand final record crowd of 50,105 spectators who turned up expecting to see a closely fought tussle between North and Norwood were not disappointed in the first term as the red and whites edged their way to a 3.1 to 2.0 lead. However, thereafter the game developed into something of a rout, North adding 20.14 to 4.9 over the remaining three quarters to win by a then SANFL grand final record margin of 108 points.

North's pre-eminence was once again annoyingly brief. In 1953 they managed only 8 wins from 18 matches to miss the finals, although one of their wins was quite noteworthy. In round 9 North defeated Norwood by 4 goals at the Sydney Cricket Ground in front of an impressively large - and largely impressed - audience of 20,000 spectators.

For most of the remainder of the 1950s North continued to disappoint, managing only two further finals appearances for the decade. In 1959 the team finished second to last with just 4 wins for the year from 18 matches, one of the worst returns in the club's entire history up to that point. Clearly, some drastic remedial action was required.

The club administration responded by appointing an experienced outsider, Jack McCarthy, as senior coach for the 1960 season. McCarthy had previously coached Port Adelaide at senior, seconds and colts level, and he immediately imbued his charges with a fresh appetite for success. Despite having basically the same group of players as in 1959 North charged up the list in 1960 to record 13 wins out of 18 and qualify for the second semi final. Once there, McCarthy had the satisfaction of seeing his new side overcome his old by 10 points after a tense, low-scoring struggle.

A fortnight later, North's opponents in the grand final were Norwood, and a huge crowd of 54,162 were treated to one of the all time great finals matches. From the start, North performed brilliantly, but the Redlegs' resistance was dogged. North led at every change by 9, 7 and 4 points before just

keeping their noses in front in a tumultuous final term to clinch the premiership by 5 points, 14.11 (95) to 13.12 (90). Rover Barry Potts with 7 goals was best afield, while Gilbourne, Hammond, Gambling, Montgomery and 1960 Magarey Medallist Barrie Barbary also performed well.

True to form, North followed their premiership success with a mediocre showing a year later to miss out on the finals. It was a similar story in 1962, but in 1963 the Roosters - as they were by now popularly known - made the grand final from 3rd after finals wins over West Adelaide (by 4 goals) and West Torrens (by 2 points). On grand final day, however, Port Adelaide effectively won the match in the first term by registering 5.8 to 0.1, and although the remaining three quarters were fairly evenly contested at no stage did North appear capable of mounting a seriously sustained challenge.

North missed the finals in 1964 and 1965 but they returned in 1966 with a 25 point first semi final win over South Adelaide followed by an abject 85 point capitulation to eventual premiers Sturt in the preliminary final. Of immeasurably greater long term significance, although it could hardly have been realised at the time, the club's Annual Report for 1966 noted:

*High hopes are held that Barrie Robran.....will continue to show the form of this season's Second Eighteen Finals. Barrie could be an important acquisition to our senior side.*⁵²

Robran made his senior debut in 1967, helping his team to the minor premiership, and finishing just a single vote behind winner Trevor Obst of Port Adelaide and team mate Don Lindner (who lost on a countback, only to be awarded a medal retrospectively by the SANFL in 1998) in the Magarey Medal. In the finals, however, he proved unable to inspire his team mates, and the Roosters succumbed by 44 points against Sturt in the second semi final and 8 points against

⁵² 'North Adelaide Football Club 1966 Annual Report', page 24.

Port Adelaide in the preliminary final to finish a disappointing 3rd.



Barrie Robran, one of the game's genuine "immortals"..

In 1968 Robran's form was even better as he won the first of his three Magarey Medals, but North were unable to improve on third place. An 18 point defeat of Glenelg in the final of an SANFL night competition which ran concurrently with the major round afforded only the scantest consolation. The general consensus of opinion at the time was that, on

their day, the Roosters were as accomplished as any other side in the competition, but a mixture of inconsistency and brittleness under pressure tended to let them down. The inability to cope with pressure was repeatedly shown at finals time, with North winning only 2 of 7 major round matches between 1966 and 1970. The inconsistency came sharply into focus in 1969 when spectacular victories over top sides were interspersed with lack lustre performances against the competition's strugglers, and North failed to make the four.

In 1970 North Adelaide broke with tradition by appointing a Victorian, Mike Patterson, as senior coach. Known as 'Swamp Fox', Patterson had played 152 games, mainly as a ruckman, with Richmond, and he was to go on to play 45 more with the Roosters. However, it was as a coach that he would exert his greatest influence.

After finishing fourth in Patterson's first season in charge, the team progressed rapidly the following year so that

*"...even midway through (the) season it was hard to begrudge North the accolade of greatness. A new found maturity (including the ability to withstand pressure), vigorous body contact and quick tackling were added to its renowned skill..... And it also acquired a facility for successful improvisation."*⁵³

The Roosters won 17 out of 21 minor round matches in 1971 to top the ladder and then proved too good for Port Adelaide in both the second semi final (by 15 points) and grand final (by 20 points) to demonstrate conclusively that they were the outstanding team in the SANFL. Best for North in the grand final were the superlative Barrie Robran, who, despite being officially named at centre half forward, played the entire match as a ruckman, rover Terry Von Bertouch, half forward Adrian Rebbeck (4 of the team's 10 goals), half back flanker David Burns, and back pocket Geoff Paull.

⁵³ South Australian Football Yearbook 1972, page 19.

A week later North gave VFL premiers Hawthorn a fright in the Championship of Australia match, ultimately going down by 24 points after leading late on in the final term.

If 1971 was good, though, the following season would be hard to improve on. After once again securing the minor premiership, North repeated its successes of twelve months earlier against Port Adelaide in both its finals matches. In the grand final, played in front of 55,709 spectators, it actually trailed at half time by 8 points before unleashing an irrepressible second half performance to add 14.8 to 4.4 and win by 56 points. Barrie Robran was at his indefatigable best to be a clear choice as best afield, while 6 goal full forward Dennis Sachse, sprightly rover Terry Von Bertouch, veteran full back Bob Hammond, and tenacious half back flanker Geoff Strang were also prominent.

Which brings us almost to where we came in: Sunday 15 October 1972 - the indisputable zenith of North Adelaide's history. For the first time the Australian Club Championships, which since being re-born in 1968 had - totally unjustly, particularly as far as Western Australia was concerned - involved only the premiers of the VFL and the SANFL, were extended to include both the WAFL premiers and the Tasmanian state champions. For the first time therefore the winning club would be able, with considerable justification, to term themselves 'champions of Australia'.

Convincing wins by Carlton and North over East Perth and City-South respectively set up the mouth-watering prospect of a final clash involving two players popularly regarded in their respective competitions as Australia's finest. In the event, Carlton's 'worm', Alex Jesaulenko, was comprehensively upstaged by his croweater rival, Barrie Robran, who in the end probably proved the decisive difference between the two sides. At one point, indeed, Jezza actually openly applauded as Robran enacted a particularly spectacular piece of magic, an incident which swiftly passed into football folklore, in South Australia at any rate.

North won 10.13 (73) to 10.12 (72), with Robran joined on the best players list by ruckman Geoff Sporn,

forward flanker Adrian Rebbeck (who booted 4.6), wingman Barry Stringer, and half forward Darryl Webb, who secured the winning goal of the match.

Television commentator Lou Richards summed things up by saying that "Robran took Superjezza and the mighty Carlton apart like a soggy newspaper."⁵⁴

With a team containing many young players presumably still to reach their peak, Mike Patterson was optimistic about the future when questioned prior to the commencement of the 1973 season:

*"The players are far more advanced physically and in their competitive attitude than at any other time since I've been in Adelaide. They think, work and act and react as friends, not just team mates."*⁵⁵

However objectively valid this assessment may have been, the history of football in general, and the North Adelaide Football Club in particular, is littered with occurrences which fly in the face of such logic. No North supporter worth his or her salt would therefore have been remotely surprised by the sequence of events which followed the Roosters' spectacular successes of 1971 and 1972.

Admittedly, North did remain a highly competitive unit in 1973, reaching a third consecutive grand final after a hard fought finals series which saw them overcome the temporary hiccup of a 6 point qualifying final loss to Sturt to down Norwood by 5 points in the first semi final before gaining spectacular revenge to the tune of 93 points against the Double Blues in the following week's preliminary final. A week later against Glenelg the Roosters were arguably the better side for much of the game but would have derived absolutely no consolation either from that or from losing what is now universally remembered as one of, if not the, greatest SANFL grand finals of all.

⁵⁴ 'The Advertiser', 16/10/72, page 17.

⁵⁵ *Football in South Australia 1907-1972*, page 11.

Going into time on in the final term North led by 5 points after clawing their way back from an 8 point three quarter time deficit, but last gasp goals from Cornes and Sandland gave the Tigers victory by 7 points, 21.11 (137) to 19.16 (130). An unusually subdued performance from Barrie Robran, who that year won the third of his Magarey Medals, did not help, but overall - notwithstanding the comments in the preceding paragraph - the Roosters could have few complaints as Glenelg had clearly been the outstanding side for 1973, sustaining only one defeat (against North, as it happened) for the entire year.

As far as North were concerned it was all to be downhill from here for some considerable time. In 1974 the side slipped to seventh on the ladder with only 7 wins out of 22 for the season. Of much greater long term significance, however, was an occurrence which took place in a match which did not even involve North Adelaide. As part of continuing efforts to promote Australian football in the eastern states the VFL and South Australia took part in an interstate match on the Sydney Cricket Ground and during the closing moments of this encounter Barrie Robran was involved in a collision which saw him sustain a serious knee injury. The immediate consequence of this was that he missed the next 9 matches, but even after his return to action he was never the same player.

Neither, coincidentally, was North Adelaide the same team. After a lack lustre loss to Port Adelaide in the elimination final of 1975 the Roosters were to remain out of the September action for eight long years. Not even Barrie Robran's appointment as coach in 1978 could lift a side which in fact plummeted to the wooden spoon that year - the club's first since 1912 - with just 5 wins out of 22.

Robran coached the Roosters for three seasons before making way in 1981 for former Sturt, Norwood, and by that stage North, player Mick Nunan, who was highly admired both for his analytical insight into the game and his fanatically infectious desire to win. Under Nunan the Roosters' improvement was steady rather than meteoric, 7 wins and 8th

position in 1981 being followed by 10 wins and 7th spot a year later. In 1983 they managed to clamber into the finals with 11 wins before achieving a good victory over South Adelaide in the elimination final. However, Sturt in the first semi final proved to have their measure.

After dropping back among the chasing pack in 1984 the Roosters stunned even their most ardent admirers the following season by winning their opening 11 matches in succession, which ultimately proved good enough to cancel out the effects of a poor run in and enable them to clinch the minor premiership.

North's poor form going into the finals, however, did nothing to inspire confidence, and perhaps in hindsight their feat in eventually reaching the 1985 grand final via an 11 point preliminary final win over West Adelaide can be viewed as something of an over-achievement. Certainly, the Roosters were never in the hunt against Glenelg (North's conquerors a fortnight earlier in the second semi) in the grand final, losing with barely a squawk by 57 points, 12.12 (84) to 21.15 (141).

A year later the same two sides again reached the grand final, although on this occasion it was North which entered the match as firm favourites following a convincing 24 point second semi final victory over the Bays. Grand final day saw a vastly different story unfold, however, and if anything Glenelg's eventual 48 point triumph was even more of a humiliation than the 1985 result, especially given the Roosters' improved pedigree.

Reflecting on the bitterness of back to back grand final defeats Andrew Jarman, who would go on to win the 1987 Magarey Medal, and would later play with distinction for the Adelaide Crows, was optimistically defiant: ".....we'll be back better than ever next year. It took Hawthorn three years to win a flag and I'm sure we can do the same."⁵⁶

Prophetic words indeed, heralding the onset of one of the most dominant all round seasons enjoyed by any club in the entire history of the SANFL. In addition to Jarman's

⁵⁶ 'Football Times' vol. 11 No. 30, 9/10/86, page 3.

Magarey, team mate Darel Hart finished as a joint runner-up for the Medal, while full forward John Roberts landed the Ken Farmer Medal for kicking the most goals during the home and away matches. If the Roosters were to go on to win the premiership they would join Port Adelaide (1914) and Norwood (1925) as one of only three SANFL clubs to have achieved, in the same season, the trifecta of premiership, Magarey Medal and top goalkicker.⁵⁷

The Roosters duly won through to a third consecutive grand final after overcoming Norwood by 20 points in the second semi final and, to the immense satisfaction of everyone connected with the club, the opposition on grand final day would be provided by the arch-nemesis, Glenelg. Mike Nunan put it thus:

"The past two years we've suffered enormously as a club and personally in terms of each individual because of the criticism we've had to bear from all over the place and a lot of it has been very much justified.

"We (the club) tend to think that unless we can remove that bogey both in a grand final and more sweetly against Glenelg then we are going to leave ourselves as a target for that criticism for the rest of our lives."⁵⁸

Thankfully, North Adelaide performed superbly in the grand final to obliterate the 'bogey' once and for all. After establishing a 5.2 to 0.1 first term lead the Roosters never looked back, eventually amassing the astonishingly accurate total of 23.7 (145) to Glenelg's 9.9 (63) to win by a resounding 82 points, at that stage the second greatest grand final winning margin in SANFL history. Recipient of the Jack Oatey Medal for best afield was 6 goal ruckman/forward Michael Parsons who had a close challenger for the award in brilliant

⁵⁷ Port Adelaide would shortly go on to achieve the feat twice more, in 1990 and 1992, with Norwood managing it for a second time in 1997, and Central District becoming the third club to do so in 2004.

⁵⁸ 'Football Times' vol. 12 No. 28, 1/10/87, page 15.

half forward cum ruck rover Darren Jarman, the younger brother of Andrew. Others to shine in what was a consummate all round team performance included rover Steve Sims (4 goals), centreman Kym Klomp, ruckman Mick Redden and wingman Roger Carlaw.

Mick Nunan neatly summarised the feelings of everyone connected with North Adelaide when he said in a post-match interview:

*"There's an enormous amount of work that has gone into winning this premiership from not a huge number of people, but then again North Adelaide's not a huge resourceful club in terms of dollars and cents, and I think it's just a good story of the battlers that have come up, been knocked down on the canvas a couple of times and have come back and have finally won - and won in a very classy fashion."*⁵⁹

At the risk of labouring the point, the follow up to North's outstanding achievement ought not to have taken anyone by surprise: in 1988, the Roosters blew hot and cold throughout the year and ultimately failed even to make the finals.

That there was still considerable talent at the club was undeniable, however, and in the 1989 minor round the Roosters once again became the measuring stick for all other clubs in the competition. Once the finals arrived though it was a less highly skilled but more ruthlessly efficient Port Adelaide side which was to prove to have North's measure, winning both the second semi final (by 20 points) and grand final (by a demoralisingly easy 94 points, with North managing a paltry 1.8 (14) for the match). The response to the loss from within the Rooster camp was predictably downbeat, but at the end of the day, irrespective of the scoreline, any grand final defeat simply means you finish the season in second place.

⁵⁹ 'Football Times' vol. 12 No. 29, 8/10/87, page 3.



North's games record holder, Orroroo farmer Mick Redden, leaps for a mark against South Adelaide towards the end of his 389 game career.

North had a solid season in 1990, winning 14 out of 20 home and away matches, but were again found wanting when confronted by Port Adelaide at the tail end of the year, this time in the preliminary final. However, the following season the Roosters adapted better than any other SANFL club to the changed local environment brought about by the

formation of the Adelaide Crows and defeated West Adelaide 21.22 (148) to 11.7 (73) in the grand final to record a thirteenth senior premiership. However, the match is remembered more for the on field mayhem than the scoreline. Players on both sides seemed at times to pay no heed whatsoever to the laws of the game and the result was an entirely undignified and chaotic spectacle which SANFL General Manager Leigh Whicker called "the most unsightly game I've ever seen".⁶⁰

As far as the actual football was concerned the Roosters fought hard to gain the upper hand in a torrid opening term and thereafter went from strength to strength. They were particularly well served by 7 goal forward pocket Darel Hart, who won the Jack Oatey Medal for best afield, classy centreman Peter Krieg who had 22 kicks, 3 marks and 6 handballs, rugged half back Tim Perkins (19-4-11), experienced centre half back Trevor Clisby, and evergreen ruckman Mick Redden.

After a 1992 season which saw the Roosters drop to 4th place Mick Nunan retired as coach to be replaced by veteran player Darel Hart. Initially, Hart felt that he would have no trouble bucking recent trends and successfully combining the roles of player and coach. However, after a dismal 1993 season in which North finished seventh with only half a dozen wins for the year he readily admitted that this had been naive of him.⁶¹ The 1994 season saw Hart coaching from the sidelines and the team showed marginal improvement to record 9 wins, although this was still not enough to qualify for the finals. In 1995, however, the Roosters played some scintillating football to reach the finals with some ease, and although they failed to progress beyond the 1st semi final there seemed every reason to expect further improvement over the next few seasons.

Sadly, however, under new coach Mick Flynn 1996 witnessed a reversal of fortunes. On their day, the Roosters

⁶⁰ 'Football Times' vol. 16 No. 31, 10/10/91, page 3.

⁶¹ See, for example, *The 1994 SANFL Yearbook*.

remained capable of overturning any opposition, but overall they were much too inconsistent to constitute a real force. In the end, North finished 6th, which probably represented a fair reflection of their abilities. In this context, 22 year old Josh Francou's unexpected Magarey Medal win was a bonus, and certainly the highlight of the season as far as the Roosters were concerned.

The 1997 season saw the appointment of former Glenelg and Adelaide champion Chris McDermott as playing coach and under his typically resolute and inspirational guidance the side qualified for the finals in 5th place. A dour elimination final tussle with Sturt saw the Roosters come out 7 points to the good, but the following week North's season was brought to an end at the hands of Central District. Overall, however, there had been improvement, and the expectations of most within the club had been more than met. It thus came as something of a surprise and disappointment when the side's form declined the following year to the extent that finals participation was not achieved.

Matters got even worse in 1999 as the Roosters succumbed to the ignominy of a wooden spoon, only the third in the club's illustrious history. Seasons 2000, 2001 and 2002 were only marginally better, yielding eighth, eighth and seventh place finishes respectively, before a demoralising slump to another wooden spoon in 2003. In 2004, however, under new coach Andrew Jarman, the Roosters restored a modicum of credibility with an at times highly promising campaign that ultimately produced a fourth place finish, a result that was repeated the following year, and improved on incrementally in 2006 (third) and 2007 (second). Fortunes since then have been varied, with a losing grand final against Norwood in 2013 the closest the Roosters have come to capturing a fourteenth senior grade flag.

Although both Port Adelaide and Norwood have been more successful than North in terms of premierships, it is arguable that the Roosters have an unmatched record over the years in terms of producing players of the highest order. Such champions have included:

- 1905 and 1906 Magarey Medallist, Tom MacKenzie;
- the man known throughout Australia during his time as 'the prince of ruckmen', Tom Leahy;
- Ken Farmer, 'football's Bradman';
- Harold 'Dribbler' Hawke, described by Geelong great Reg Hickey as "the greatest centre half forward I have ever seen",⁶²
- ultra versatile dual Magarey Medallist, Ron Phillips;
- arguably the doyen of South Australian full backs, Ian McKay;
- aerialist and on field leader supreme, Don Lindner;
- the player adjudged by some as the greatest ever, Barrie Robran;
- the mercurially talented Jarman brothers, Andrew and Darren.

Players of this quality bequeath a legacy that enriches, ennobles and enhances the game, and to many football lovers it remains a shame that those who oversee and, in effect, manipulate the game's destiny appear to have little or no awareness of the importance, or even in many cases the existence, of such individuals.

Epic Win for North

The 1919 SAFL Season

In South Australia, top level football was suspended, owing to the war, between 1916 and 1918. This was in contrast to the situation in both Victoria and Western Australia

⁶² Quoted in 'Sporting Life', August 1950, page 25.

where league football was persevered with, albeit, inevitably, on a reduced scale.⁶³ As far as South Australia was concerned, the closest thing to league football was a patriotic competition, which was formed in 1916 at the instigation of the Railways Football Club. A fair number of past and future league players participated in this competition, and indeed teams bearing the names of five of the seven SAFL clubs competed at some stage. Other participating clubs included Prospect, St Francis Xavier, Sturt Central and Kenilworth. Railways, the original instigators of the venture, only lasted a few weeks before withdrawing.

Matches in the patriotic league received scant media coverage, but grew in popularity as the end of the war approached. The 1918 grand final, for instance, attracted a crowd of roughly 7,000 to watch West Torrens 5.13 (43) defeat West Adelaide 3.11 (29). The 1916 and 1917 premierships had both been won by Port Adelaide.⁶⁴

Hardly surprisingly, the 1919 South Australian league football season - the first for four years - was the subject of enormous public anticipation, with the media doing much to stimulate and reinforce this. The resumption of top level sport, in addition to providing a reassuring reminder that the status quo had been restored, afforded a ready-made opportunity to luxuriate in the cultural values and ideals which, in the view of many, the recent war had defended and maintained.⁶⁵ Thus Saturday 3 May 1919 at the Adelaide,

⁶³ In the VFL, for instance, University withdrew in 1915 to leave a nine team competition, while the following year, only four clubs competed. This was increased to six in 1917 and eight in 1918, with full scale competition only resuming in 1919 after the war had ended. Nevertheless, the flags won in 1915 by Carlton, 1916 by Fitzroy, 1917 by Collingwood and 1918 by South Melbourne continue to be accorded the same status as all other V/AFL premierships.

⁶⁴ See *The South Australian Football Story* by Bernard Whimpress, pages 30-2, for more a detailed discussion of football in South Australia during world war one.

⁶⁵ Australian Prime Minister William Hughes, in reviewing the recent conflict in the House of Representatives on 19 September 1919, declared that it had been engaged in "for our own national safety, in order to ensure our national integrity, to safeguard our liberties, and those free institutions of government

Unley and Alberton Ovals was a time for celebration and relief, albeit tinged with a certain sadness over what had been irrevocably changed or lost.

Eventual challenge finalists Sturt and North Adelaide were the first sides to declare their hands. When they met at Adelaide Oval in round 6 both were still undefeated, the Blues with 3 wins and 2 byes, and the northerners with 4 and 1 bye. Sturt gave a hint of how the season was ultimately to pan out with a dominating performance that was only sullied by some atrocious kicking. They won by 19 points, 5.15 (45) to 3.8 (26). Having won the 1915 premiership the Blues were effectively in pursuit of back to back titles, a quest that would be aided by the arrival at the club of a crop of excellent recruits including former patriotic league players Ted Colquhoun, Stan Scrutton, Reg Whitehead and Freddy Odgers, together with a sprinkling of talent from interstate. According to club secretary Wilfred Tank, "We have a solid, evenly-balanced team, without a weak spot. Bill Mayman is the best captain around, the old players respect him, the juniors worship him".⁶⁶ All told, Sturt would blood eighteen newcomers at some stage during the 1919 season.

At North Adelaide, there was a much smaller turnover of players, with only seven debutants. However, one of these was Jack Hamilton, rated by some judges in the 1920s as the greatest all round footballer seen until then. North also had undoubtedly the best ruckman in South Australia, if not Australia, in Tom Leahy, plus other noteworthy players in Clem Dayman, Bert Fooks, Cec Curnow and Dan O'Brien.

West Torrens, coached by pre-war star Bert Filsell, and with the imposing figure of Stan Patten as captain, were expected by many to be the team to beat in 1919, especially given that they had retained a fair number of the players who

which, whatever may be our political opinions, are essential to our national life, and to maintain those ideals which we have nailed to the very topmost of our flagpoles". (Quoted in *A Short History Of Australia* by Manning Clark, fourth revised edition, Penguin Books 1995, page 237.)

⁶⁶ Quoted in *True Blue* by John Lysikatos, page 60. However, see footnote 69 below.

had helped them win the 1918 patriotic premiership. Playing a fast, open brand of football which was heavily reliant on handball there were times during the 1919 minor round when they seemed head and shoulders above any other team in the competition, but all too often their dominance did not translate into scoreboard superiority. The main reason for this was their woeful kicking for goal, with their season's tally of 692 points being comprised of 88 goals and 164 behinds, which constituted an accuracy rate of a dire 34.92%.⁶⁷ In the round 6 clash with West Adelaide at Hindmarsh, Torrens produced one of the most goal-shy displays in league history when they amassed 8.27 (75) to Westies' 5.4 (34).



Messrs Leahy (left) and Patten pictured shaking hands prior to the 1920 semi final between North and Torrens, which was won by the former by 15 points.

In welcoming back eight of the players who had helped propel them to unprecedented greatness in 1913 and 1914 Port Adelaide might reasonably have been expected to mount a formidable premiership challenge in 1919. However, most of these players were now well past their best, while the new members of the team were still a couple of seasons away

⁶⁷ In the interests of fairness it should perhaps be pointed out that none of the seven teams which comprised the SAFL in 1919 were particularly accurate when kicking for goal. Indeed, all seven amassed more behinds than goals, with Sturt's tally of 108-123 (771) - an accuracy rate of 46.75% - being by some measure the 'best'.

from making their mark. Nevertheless, the Magpies might be considered a touch unfortunate to have been drawn to play West Torrens in the semi finals rather than North Adelaide, as the blue and golds had clearly had Port's measure in 1919, winning both minor round clashes convincingly. By contrast, the ease with which the Magpies had overcome North in round 12, just a month before the start of the finals, suggested that a semi final re-match would have elicited few fears at Alberton.

The premiership ladder at the conclusion of the home and away rounds read as follows:

	Points						
	W	L	D	For	Ag	%	Pts
Sturt	10	2	-	771	563	57.79	20
West Torrens	9	3	-	692	569	54.87	18
North Adelaide	7	5	-	610	471	56.42	14
Port Adelaide	6	5	1	693	544	56.02	13
South Adelaide	4	7	1	605	662	47.75	9
West Adelaide	4	8	-	595	854	41.06	8
Norwood	1	11	-	549	852	39.18	2

Len Lackman of Port Adelaide, one of the eight pre-war returnees mentioned above, booted 26 goals for the season to top the league's goal kicking ladder, while South Adelaide centre half back Dan Moriarty won the first of his three successive Magarey Medals.

On the interstate front, South Australia met the VFL on 5 July in Adelaide, losing 8.8 (56) to 9.8 (62), and on 2 August in Melbourne, when the outcome was uncannily similar, the Vics winning 11.8 (74) to 10.8 (68).

Betting on football was rife in 1919, and the expected evenness of the finals series produced a welter of business for the bookies. Sturt, who would enjoy the right of challenge if

beaten in either their semi final or the final, were narrowly favoured to retain their title, but there was considerable backing for West Torrens, too. North's and Port's chances were not rated so highly, the former because of their worrying decline in form over the final month of the minor round, and the latter because of their inability to beat either Sturt or Torrens during the year.

Semi Finals

A crowd of 16,000, equalling the record for a semi final established in 1909, attended the clash between Sturt and North Adelaide at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday 30 August. The Double Blues had beaten North by 19 points at Adelaide in round 6, and by 8 points at Unley in round 16, and as a result were warmly favoured to win. However, to the dismay of Sturt supporters, and the scepticism of both the media and many members of the public, the unfancied red and whites produced what, on the face of it, was far and away their best performance of the season to win with ease, 7.18 (60) to 3.5 (23). Thus, for the eighth time in ten seasons, the minor premier had capitulated during the finals against supposedly weaker opposition, thereby ensuring that the league would enjoy a lucrative bonus in the shape of a bumper challenge final pay-out.⁶⁸ Hardly surprisingly, cynics were quick to suggest that the Blues had 'laid down', but such allegations are notoriously difficult to prove. What does seem certain, however, is that, despite Wilfred Tank's previously quoted confident assertion to the contrary, there was dissension in the ranks at Unley, with a yawning gap emerging between many of the players and what they saw as an overbearingly autocratic committee. Moreover, club skipper Bill Mayman, far from being an object of respect and even 'worship', was regarded as a quintessential 'committee man', and was widely mistrusted and disliked. Not

⁶⁸ For comparison, in the VFL over the same period there were a total of 13 premierships contested, with 9 of those only being decided after a challenge final.

surprisingly, therefore, he would end up being deprived of the captaincy the following year,⁶⁹ a fact which, in retrospect, makes Sturt's 1919 premiership triumph seem all the more laudable and extraordinary.



North's Dan O'Brien.

The second semi final between West Torrens and Port Adelaide took place a week later, on Saturday 6 September. During the minor round Torrens had twice beaten the Magpies by an identical 18 point margin: 7.10 (52) to 3.16 (34) in round 5 at Alberton, and 9.18 (72) to 7.12 (54) at Hindmarsh in round 15. They maintained their supremacy in a one-sided finals encounter, winning by 4 straight goals, 9.5 (59) to 5.5 (35). The win, and perhaps even more significantly the quality of the performance, earned the blue and golds outright premiership favouritism at that stage, despite the fact that they would have to win two more games, compared to Sturt's one, to take out the flag. Quite remarkably, it was Torrens' first ever victory in a finals match, bringing to an end a sequence of 7 semi final losses stretching back to 1900.

The first of the games that Torrens needed to win would be a cut-throat final against North Adelaide, who had beaten the blue and golds in round 4, but lost to them in round

⁶⁹Sturt's 1920 captain was appointed as a result of a ballot among the players. In a straight contest between Mayman and Victor Richardson, the latter player received 80% of the vote to win easily. Mayman served as Sturt's vice-captain in 1920 before transferring to Tasmanian side New Town the following year.

13. Both matches had been fiercely contested and close, and so what transpired at Adelaide Oval on Saturday 13 September 1919 should not really have taken anyone by surprise.

Final: West Torrens vs. North Adelaide

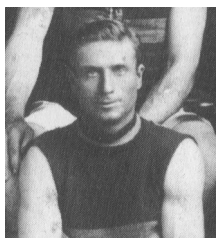
"..... football has seldom been witnessed in such dreary circumstances." (The Advertiser', 15/9/19, page 10)



Torrens full back Edwin Daviess.

The match commenced in heavy rain, with an extremely strong north-westerly breeze blowing more or less directly across the oval from wing to wing. Apart from the seated areas in the grandstands, the crowd was sparse - quite understandably, given the weather conditions. At one point a large group of male spectators, tired of being at the mercy of the elements, stormed the members' stand after its gates had been opened to admit a contingent of ladies; before the police could intervene, the stand was full to overflowing, with not only the seats but all of the aisles crammed with boisterous, bedraggled, but mainly good humoured supporters.

North Adelaide's captain Tom Leahy won the toss and elected to kick to the southern end, which was probably marginally favoured by the wind, although overall its impact was negligible. The ground surface was exceptionally slippery, rain having been falling continuously since mid-morning, and there were also about a dozen puddles of water of various sizes ranged all over the oval. Within minutes of play starting the ball had become like a heavy, sodden bar of soap, and for most of the afternoon the spectacle presented to the crowd would be more akin to soccer or water polo than football.



Bert Fooks of North.

1st Quarter

Predictably, play from the outset was very scrumbly, with numerous scrimmages, and much soccering of the ball off the ground. Torrens attacked first, but the North half back line held firm. Then it was North's turn to push forward, which they did with a fair amount of craft and purpos***e given the conditions, and five minutes in Fullarton snapped the first goal of the game.

During the opening minutes, players of both sides had had difficulty keeping their feet, but as the quarter went on they began to cope better with the conditions.

Torrens responded to North's goal by raising the tempo of the play. They even managed to produce a few passages of decent football, one of which culminated in their first score of the match, a behind. For most of the remainder

of the term the blue and golds were in the ascendancy, but it was not until moments before the bell that a chain of passes involving Karney, Patten and Marvell ended with the last named running into an open goal to fire his team to a 1 point advantage at the first change.

QUARTER TIME: West Torrens 1.1 (7); North Adelaide 1.0 (6)

2nd Quarter

With the rain showing no signs of abating, North opened the second quarter by mounting their first concerted attack since the early stages of the first term, but Torrens were quick to repel them.

With the ball still comparatively dry, Torrens were making good use of handball, and a neat sequence of inter-passing saw them maneuver the ball to within a few metres of goal, only for Tom Leahy to intervene for the northerners and relieve the pressure. The blue and golds attacked again, and a snapped behind from Marvell gave them the first score of the term.

As the quarter continued, all science and system departed from the play, which consisted mainly of a series of frantic scrimmages, interspersed with hurried, hopeful kicks off the ground. Moreover, the ball seemed to be out of bounds almost as often as it was in play. Many of the players were soon coated from head to toe in mud, and it became increasingly difficult to tell the teams apart. There appeared to be little adherence to the principle of sticking to your position, and for the most part upwards of twenty players might be said to be on the ball. From time to time, Torrens would endeavour to initiate a sequence of handpasses, and although one such move gave rise to a second behind of the term to Marvell, for the most part the conditions were quick to reassert themselves and play reverted to a frenetic, uncoordinated mud scramble.

Midway through the quarter North mounted a promising attack, but Torrens centreman Johnny Karney, having intercepted the ball close to goal, embarked on an exhilarating fifty metre run that briefly brought the somewhat sombre crowd to life. His kick landed on the half forward line for the blue and golds, but North's will 'o the wisp defender Jack Hamilton intervened and promptly sent the ball back from whence it came.

An untidy sequence of "punches, kicks along the ground, and certain unorthodox maneuvers"⁷⁰ enabled North to launch another promising attack, but the Torrens defence seemed virtually impregnable at this stage of the match, and combined well to relieve. Moments before the bell North full forward Dan O'Brien had his team's first and only shot for goal of the term, but the ball sailed out of bounds. At the long break, Torrens had extended their lead from 1 to 3 points, with Les Marvell having been responsible for his team's entire score.

HALF TIME: West Torrens 1.3 (9); North Adelaide 1.0 (6)

3rd Quarter

Quite a number of players changed their shorts during the half time interval, and when they re-emerged from the changing rooms they would have been gratified to discover that the rain had, at last, abated. Once play got underway, however, it proved to be just as scrambly and unkempt as ever.

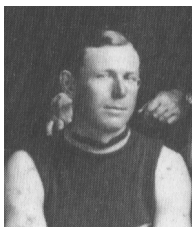
Five minutes into the quarter a rushed behind gave the red and whites their first score since the opening term, and when Torrens attempted a swift riposte they were repelled by Hamilton who, almost alone among the thirty-six players on view, seemed capable of handling the ball cleanly, and disposing of it with vim, vision and purpose.

⁷⁰ 'The Advertiser', 15/9/19, page 10.

North, seemingly the stronger and more desperate side at this stage of the match, forced the ball forward once more and it was scrambled through for another behind to reduce the margin to just 1 point. Shortly afterwards, Bert Fooks, a former Torrens player, cleverly gathered the ball in a scrum and snapped truly to give the northerners the lead their more decisive play since half time warranted.

From the ensuing centre throw-up (bouncing the ball being entirely out of the question) Torrens attacked briskly, but O'Brien, now taking a run on the ball, took a well-judged relieving mark.

An unusually fluent phase of play saw Torrens maneuver the ball to well within range of goal, only for Marvell to ruin everything by fumbling badly. As a result, he was bundled unceremoniously aside by the North defenders, and the danger was cleared.



North great Percy Lewis.

Play was becoming more willing and strenuous, and there was a good deal of illicit activity - tripping, jumper tugging, even hacking - going on outside the ken of umpire Johnstone, who in any case seemed inclined, for the most part, to keep his whistle in his pocket, no doubt as a concession to the conditions.

Towards the end of the term it was noticeable that the strength of the wind had declined, but the heavy surface and slippery ball still made skilful football virtually impossible. Torrens finished the quarter in the ascendant, but found it

hard to get closer to goal than their half forward line. At last, however, a loose ball was gathered up by Manning some forty metres out and, with time and space to run on and steady, he made no mistake from a distance of about twenty-five metres to restore the blue and golds' lead.

THREE QUARTER TIME: West Torrens 2.3 (15); North Adelaide 2.2 (14)

4th Quarter

Torrens had played with a loose man in defence for most of the third quarter, and, despite only leading by the narrowest of margins, persisted with this ploy in the final term. Ironically, it almost succeeded, for although North spent a lot of time in attack they were largely unable to get close enough to goal to attempt a shot.

The first golden opportunity of the quarter fell to Torrens, however, as Marvell gathered the ball in acres of space well within scoring range, with only North full back Wallis between him and the goals. Instead of taking a shot though the nippy rover backed himself to dodge around his opponent and was comprehensively collared.

Hamilton and Curnow then combined well for North but the latter's seemingly goal bound kick was marked almost on the goal line by Daviess, the Torrens 'goal keeper' and future captain. Moments later the red and whites again managed to maneuver the ball to well within scoring range, but the umpire picked out a free kick to the Torrens skipper, Patten, and the danger was quelled.

Midway through the quarter the sun came out for the first time in the game, and almost as if in celebration North registered a behind to level the scores. The hitherto moribund crowd was now beginning to make a considerable amount of noise as North pressed repeatedly forward in a bid to snatch the game. Torrens, however, defended with grim efficiency, kicking the ball out of bounds at every opportunity, and repeatedly hurling bodies en masse at the ball in order to

force scrimmages, and hold up play. For all their pressure and territorial superiority the red and whites failed to eke out a single, clear-cut scoring opportunity, and with a couple of minutes left to play it was Torrens who almost clinched the game. A long, probing kick from Marsh seemed to be skidding and rolling ominously goalwards until Hamilton, who for much of the afternoon had been playing football on a different plane to virtually every other player on the field, made an electrifying dash across the face of goal, scooped up the soggy ball as thought it was dry, and sank his boot into a hefty punt kick that transferred the focus of play to the veritable buffalo wallow that masqueraded as the centre of the ground. A frantic, all-in melee ensued which was still in full swing when the bell sounded to end the match.

FINAL SCORE: West Torrens 2.3 (15); North Adelaide 2.3 (15)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
West Torrens	1.2	1.3	2.3	2.3	15
North Adelaide	1.0	1.0	2.2	2.3	15

BEST - West Torrens: Johnson, Wade, Karney, Patten, Campbell, Marsh **North Adelaide:** Hamilton, Curnow, Dayman, Leahy, Fooks, Frost

GOALS - West Torrens: Marvell, Manning **North Adelaide:** Fooks, Fullarton

Final Replay: North Adelaide vs. West Torrens

"There will be few who will gainsay this. Never this year have teams been so evenly matched. West Torrens died hard." ('The Advertiser', 22/9/19, page 12)

In contrast to a week earlier, the weather was fine, and the condition of the turf, according to 'The Advertiser's' football reporter, "first-class". A large crowd, estimated at somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000, was in attendance - somewhat more than might have been expected had there been any major counter-attractions, such as an important race meeting, on offer.

The West Torrens line-up was identical to that which took the field in the previous week's drawn final, while North were forced to omit Trescowthick because of injury, with his place being taken by Vincent Leahy.

Just as he had a week ago, North's captain Tom Leahy won the toss and elected to kick to the southern end of the Adelaide Oval, although what slight breeze there was seemed to favour the northern end.

1st Quarter

Many of the Torrens players must have experienced a sense of déjà-vu as they saw their team surge into attack from the opening bounce, only for Jack Hamilton to intervene, and clear the danger with archetypal smoothness and conviction. North then pressed hard in a bid to find an opening, but Clarence Curnow marked strongly in front of the goal posts to relieve.

The next few minutes saw the blue and golds displaying some of the excellent combined play, featuring deft, intelligent handball and short, crisp stab passing, that had characterised their best performances during the minor round. A frantic passage of play near the Torrens goal culminated in a North defender spearing a low kick toward the half back left boundary, only for Stan Patten to pick the ball up on first bounce, run on, and register the first goal of the game with a thumping punt kick from roughly fifty metres distance.

Torrens continued to play the better football, and a couple of minutes later Patten nabbed a second goal from a

similar position to his first. With only six minutes having elapsed, the blue and golds had almost equalled their entire previous week's score.

In complete contrast to a week earlier, players of both sides, particularly North, were kicking long, and marking well. There were occasional fumbles, but these seemed to be attributable to over-eagerness, and as the quarter went on they were less frequent.



Les Marvell (West Torrens)

For several minutes the play moved from end to end at considerable pace, but there was no addition to the scores, although a long shot from North's centre half forward Dayman seemed to be sailing through for a goal only to be marked right on the line by Allen, the West Torrens back pocket player.

Several minutes elapsed before North again had a chance to score, through Fullarton, but this time it was Marsh who came to the blue and golds' rescue with a fine saving mark.

North continued to attack, however, and with time running out Dayman finally managed to post their first score of the afternoon, a major, courtesy of a hurried snap from close

in. Moments later, and within seconds of the bell, another seemingly goal-bound shot from the northerners was juggled and then dropped a metre or so from the line by a Torrens defender, and umpire Johnstone controversially awarded a mark. Needless to say, many of the North players protested, but the umpire was unmoved, and before play could resume the bell sounded to end the term.

QUARTER TIME: West Torrens 2.0 (12); North Adelaide 1.0 (6)

2nd Quarter

Torrens centreman Karney had injured his shoulder during the opening term, and began the second quarter in a forward pocket. He was replaced in the centre by O'Loughlin.

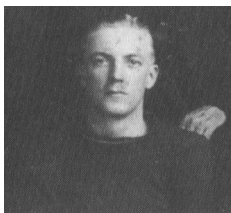
Stan Patten, the Torrens skipper, grabbed the ball from the opening centre bounce of the term and kicked toward centre half forward, where Marvell marked well. His shot for goal failed to make the distance, however, and the North defence combined well to relieve. The blue and golds were soon back on the attack again, and during a strenuous passage of play near goal umpire Johnstone, adjudging that a North defender had thrown the ball away when tackled, awarded a free kick to the tackler, Les Marvell. From a mere twenty metres out directly in front the Torrens goalsneak had no trouble in raising two flags.

North's response was spirited and effective as a long, probing punt kick by Davey was marked in the goal square, three metres out, by Dayman, who made no mistake. From the ensuing centre bounce, North attacked again, and as Tom Leahy chased the ball in front of goal he was manhandled by his Torrens opponent and promptly awarded a free. His goal to tie the scores elicited the loudest roar of the afternoon from the hitherto fairly subdued crowd.

The first behind of the afternoon arrived a couple of minutes later, to Torrens. From the kick in, Dayman took an

excellent mark and initiated a promising looking North rush which was eventually short-circuited by O'Loughlin.

For some five minutes around the middle of the quarter Torrens enjoyed a purple patch during which they attacked relentlessly, but the red and white defence was, for the most part, equal to the task of containing them.



North half back flanker Jack "Snowy" Hamilton, perhaps one of the most underrated players in the history of the game.

The most fluent move of the game so far saw the blue and gold quartet of Manning, Marvel, Karney and Patten maneuver the ball the length of the ground to well within range of goal, where Mayne marked. He kicked badly, however, only just managing to register a minor score. North responded with some neat football of their own which culminated in Fullarton hitting a fast leading Vin Leahy on the chest with a bullet like stab pass. Less than thirty metres out, on the slightest of angles, Leahy duly converted to put the northerners in front for the first time in the match.

The play of both teams was becoming faster, and better to watch, and the crowd was beginning to give voice to its appreciation.

Hollis and Campbell teamed well for Torrens along the grandstand wing, and the latter found Manning in the forward pocket with a good pass. Manning's kick was a beauty, and the blue and golds were back in the box seat.

No more than a minute later Hollis was again in the thick of the action, this time combining well with Stone to

release Karney close to goal, and the nimble Torrens rover was able to run to within near point blank range and easily secure full points.

Another dangerous looking Torrens attack followed almost immediately, but North's half back flanker Hamilton, playing with his customary verve, poise and brilliance, intercepted superbly and sent the ball well over the centreline into his team's attacking half, where Fooks gathered and kicked long towards the goal square. As the inevitable pack formed, Tom Leahy came rushing in from behind and soared high to take a sky-scraping mark, easily the best of the game so far. He made no mistake with his kick, and shortly after the resumption the bell sounded with the scoreboard showing the blue and golds holding a slim, 2 point advantage.

HALF TIME: West Torrens 5.2 (32); North Adelaide 5.0 (30)

3rd Quarter

Johnny Karney resumed after half time with his left arm strapped to his side, a legacy of the shoulder injury sustained during the opening term. As in the second quarter, he stationed himself in a forward pocket, but it was clear that West Torrens would effectively be playing a man short from now on.

The first five minutes of the third term saw the ball being swept repeatedly from one end of the ground to the other, although there was a discernible contrast in the way the two teams achieved this. The northerners favoured long kicks to position, whereas Torrens relied heavily on handball, which they utilised with swift, almost unerring efficiency. The opening score of the quarter, a behind to North, came courtesy of a Vin Leahy place kick.

As Torrens endeavoured to battle their way back into contention the play became more scrumbly, with many players of both sides leaving their positions to chase the ball. Tom Leahy was playing a hero's game both in the ruck and all over the ground, and the blue and golds were reduced to

employing illicit means to keep him under control. Umpire Johnstone was quick to penalise any misdemeanours, however, and 'the prince of ruckmen' was awarded at least ten free kicks during the term.

Another player to catch the eye was North's half back flanker Williams, who took a series of telling marks. Taking a leaf out of his fellow half back flanker Hamilton's book, his disposal was first rate, too.

During the second half of the quarter it was noticeable that Torrens were playing with much greater aggression, and there were many more scrimmages and stoppages as a result. On one occasion, play had to be suspended for a couple of minutes after the North Adelaide centre half forward Clem Dayman was knocked out cold during a marking contest. He eventually got groggily back to his feet.

The blue and golds' only score for the quarter came via a rushed behind, but had Johnson's booming kick from almost the centre of the ground carried a couple of metres more it would have produced one of the goals of the season.

THREE QUARTER TIME: West Torrens 5.3 (33); North Adelaide 5.1 (31)

4th Quarter

The early running in the final term was made by North, who soon had a behind on the board off the boot of Tom Leahy. The veteran ruckman was at his indefatigable best, and the behind came after he comprehensively out-bodied his Torrens opposite number in Wade to take a typically commanding mark.

The blue and golds attempted to respond, but North's half back line was too good, and within a couple of minutes it was the northerners who were again attacking relentlessly. After a particularly frantic scrimmage close to goal the ball spun loose into the goal square and North's full forward Dan O'Brien was just able to toe poke it over the line before being flattened. The goal gave the red and whites a lead of 5

points, but there were still at least twenty minutes of play remaining.

Those twenty minutes saw plenty of fast, furious football, but also plenty of fumbling as the pressure of the situation got through to the players. North were winning consistently in the air, but Torrens' ground play was superior. Overall, this produced something of a stalemate, with neither side able to manufacture a decisive opening. Torrens were clearly missing the drive from centre that would normally have been provided by Karney, and as the quarter wore on their forwards began to wander further and further towards the middle of the ground in search of kicks. This proved to be entirely counter-productive, however, as all it did was make the play more congested, enabling North to force repeated stoppages in the play.

Towards the end of the match Tom Leahy had an excellent chance to score when he was freed across half forward but his kick for goal was well saved almost on the line by Mayne.

When the bell sounded, the red and whites were on the attack, and Torrens had only one man, the injured Karney, ahead of centre. Although overall there was very little if anything between the two teams, the blue and golds looked a very tired lot by the end.

FINAL SCORE: North Adelaide 6.2 (38); West Torrens 5.3 (33)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
North Adelaide	1.0	5.0	5.1	6.2	38
West Torrens	2.0	5.2	5.3	5.3	33

BEST - North Adelaide: T.Leahy, Williams, Dayman, Davey, Hamilton, Fooks **West Torrens:** Johnson, Manning, Willis, Wade, Campbell, Mayne

GOALS **North Adelaide:** T.Leahy 2; Davey, Dayman, V.Leahy, O'Brien **West Torrens:** Patten 2; Karney, Manning, Marvel

Postscript - The Challenge Final and Replay

Prior to the 1919 challenge final, North Adelaide and Sturt had never met in a finals match. It was somehow appropriate, therefore, that their first encounters should be so grimly and closely fought.



Ted Colquhoun (Sturt)

In the challenge final on Saturday 27 September North, having won the toss through Tom Leahy and kicked to the Cathedral end, opened brightly, and seemed well on course for victory when they led by 26 points at the first change. The Double Blues, however, fought back strongly in the 2nd term, and by the long break had reduced their deficit to just 5 points.

Play in the 3rd quarter was congested, untidy, and pressure-packed. Only 3 behinds were registered, 2 to Sturt, and 1 to the northerners, meaning that at 'lemons' the difference between the teams was a mere 4 points, with North on 5.4 (34) to the Blues' 4.6 (30)

The early stages of the final term were similarly frenetic, with defences still very much in the ascendancy. With time-on approaching, and North ahead by one straight kick, 5.9 to 4.9, Sturt full forward Frank Golding marked near goal and played on immediately with a handpass to Les Smith, who kicked truly to level the scores. The last significant scoring chance fell to the Double Blues, deep into time-on, but Owen Beatty, having marked a mere thirty metres from goal on no appreciable angle, kicked woefully to miss everything. **Final scores: North Adelaide 5.9 (39); Sturt 5.9 (39).**

The replay was scheduled for the Labor Day holiday on Wednesday 8 October, and proved to be just as thrilling as the initial encounter between the teams. After an evenly contested opening term, North gradually seemed to be asserting themselves, and they led by 7 points at the half, and 14 points at the last change. Early in the final term North almost grabbed another goal but Ted Colquhoun rescued his team, and their season, with a spectacular last gasp save. Sturt then went straight to the other end of the ground and goaled. A second goal midway through the quarter reduced the margin to just 2 points, and with two minutes of the game left a behind to Owen Beatty made the scoreline North 2.6 (18) to Sturt 2.5 (17). Ivor Nicolle's winning goal just 35 seconds before the final bell has entered football folklore, and remains arguably the most memorably dramatic moment in the entire history of the Sturt Football Club, perhaps only seriously challenged for that distinction by Keith Chessell's demon-exorcising post-siren goal to beat Port at Alberton in 1966. **Final scores: Sturt 3.5 (23); North Adelaide 2.6 (18)**

The Double Blues had won the flag, and the dissension at Unley was briefly forgotten as the team and its supporters celebrated joyously. Entering the Sturt changing rooms along with his chairman Fred Bennett, North captain Tom Leahy manfully suppressed his personal disappointment by declaring, "No doubt it was thought, after your long recess, that you would not find your feet again. After the match which we made a draw, I expected a harder struggle today. The game was played in a splendid spirit. We would have loved to get the premiership, but it was not to be ours".⁷¹

North Adelaide's moment would soon come, however. Less than twelve months later, still under Leahy's captaincy, they would procure the 1920 pennant without the need for a challenge on the strength of a resounding 9.15 (69) to 3.3 (21) final victory over Norwood.

North Adelaide's Finest Hour

1972 Championship of Australia Final: North Adelaide vs. Carlton

This section consists of contemporary match reports and reviews of the above game derived from a variety of sources. All content is reproduced verbatim.

From The South Australian National Football League Annual Report 1972

At the conclusion of seasons 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1971 the Premier Teams of the Victorian and South Australian Leagues played off at Adelaide Oval for the title of 'CHAMPIONS OF AUSTRALIA'. This competition was extended in 1972 to include the Premier Teams of Western Australia and Tasmania. The matches were delayed because of a 'draw' in the Victorian Football League Major Round, but

⁷¹ 'The Advertiser', 9/10/19, page 8.

a successful Championship Series was played on 14th and 15th October, 1972, although the weather was unkind on the second day (a Sunday).



North Adelaide's acting captain Bob Hammond accepts the spoils of victory from the South Australian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Corcoran.

After a tremendous struggle in the Final, NORTH ADELAIDE covered itself with glory and brought great distinction to South Australian Football by defeating the Victorian Premiers, Carlton, by one point. North Adelaide had previously defeated City-South (of Tasmania) and Carlton had beaten East Perth (of Western Australia).

The North Adelaide victory triggered a tremendous demonstration by thousands of spectators, the players being surrounded by overjoyed supporters. The handsome CHAMPIONSHIP CUP (presented jointly by the Victorian and South Australian Leagues) was presented to North Adelaide Acting Captain, Bob Hammond, by the Deputy Premier of

South Australia, the Honourable J.D. Corcoran M.P. While the League hopes that presentations of this nature will always be carried out in a circumspect fashion, it realises, of course, that this particular occasion was rather special.

From The Victorian Football League 76th Annual Report 1972

As a natural progression from the matches which have been played annually since 1968 between the Premiership teams of the Victorian and South Australian Leagues, a knock-out series between the Premier teams of the four major football States, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, was played in Adelaide on Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th October.

The series was originally set down for decision on Saturday 7th and Monday 9th (a Public holiday in Adelaide) but was delayed for one week following the draw in the VFL Semi Final match between Richmond and Carlton. The compulsory change in programme dates meant that the competing teams were faced with playing matches on successive days.

North Adelaide (S.A.N.F.L.) won the title as 'Australia's Champion Team' by defeating Carlton (V.F.L.) by one point in a tense and exciting game. After appearing to be in a winning position at the last interval, Carlton tired badly and failed to take advantage of a strong wind advantage.

North Adelaide thoroughly deserved their victory, but may have been fortunate to meet a Carlton which had lost many players through injury after a strenuous match against East Perth (W.A.N.F.L.) on the previous days (sic.).

Prize money was divided as follows:

North Adelaide (winners)	\$10,000
Carlton (runner up)	\$3,000
East Perth (3rd)	\$2,000
City-South (4th)	\$1,000

Attendances were somewhat disappointing although heavy rain on the final day greatly reduced the numbers of patrons attending the all-important final match between North Adelaide and Carlton.

From South Australian Football Record Year Book 1973

North Adelaide shocked the football world when it toppled Carlton by a point (10.13 to 10.12) in the Australian club championship final at Adelaide Oval.



Players vie for possession during a frenetic moment in the game. The North Adelaide players from left to right are Bohdan Jaworskyj, Geoff Paul, Alan Howard and Bob Hammond. Greg Kennedy is the visible Carlton player.

It was an historic victory, being the first time that a major match had been held in SA on a Sunday.

Trailing by five points at three-quarter time, North seemed in a hopeless position when it headed for home into a five-goal wind.

The odds of victory lengthened when Carlton goaled in the first five minutes to widen the gap to 11 points. To the crowd of 23,213 it just seemed a matter of time.

But a minute later North battled against the elements to goal through Dennis Sachse. That was the spark that the SA premiers needed.

Displaying tremendous fighting spirit, and with reserves of stamina, North scored again through Darryl Webb in the 17th minute to hit the front.

Play fluctuated from end to end, but that was the final score after magnificent defence by North led (by) Bohdan Jaworskyj, Bob Hammond and John Spry.

There were other factors in North's great win - the dynamic ruckwork of Gary Sporn, the brilliance of centreman Barrie Robran and wingman Barry Stringer, the evasion in attack of Adrian Rebbeck and the solidity at centre half-forward of Neil Sachse.

In addition, there was the battering that Carlton had taken a day earlier against WA premiers East Perth - a tough match that had caused a Carlton reshuffle for the final through injuries and had left many other players stiff and sore.

From Inside Football's Football Close-up 1973

North Adelaide, coached by former Richmond stalwart Mike Patterson, came from behind into a five goal wind to beat Carlton by a solitary point.

Carlton was depleted, no doubt - and with its six missing grand final stars in the team probably would've beaten North by a couple of goals.

But the way North swamped the Blues in that torrid last quarter (it held Carlton scoreless for the last 12 minutes),

showed that SA was capable of pressure football. Even if it took an ex-Victorian to make the point.

Patterson, who played 167 games for Richmond, says that (Barrie) Robran is the best player he's ever seen. Jesaulenko is reputed to have stood and clapped after a piece of Robran wizardry during (this) match.

A dual Magarey Medallist and winner of just about every award, Robran is not vaguely interested in playing VFL football.

From Football in South Australia 1907-1972

Hard, skilled, well coached, full of courage and deserving. No praise can be too big for the North Adelaide team that contested Carlton to determine the Club Champions of Australia.

North, it seemed, had booted away its chances with some appalling kicking for goal in the third quarter.

At the last change North was down five points. Carlton goaled at the 5 minute mark, but North refused to give way.

Dennis Sachse replied with a goal, and, 12 minutes later, Darryl Webb ran into an open goal and North were 1 point up.

The North Adelaide backmen defended in a fanatical manner, refusing to allow Carlton to score again.

The crowd of 23,213 were hysterical as the siren sounded, showing North 1 point in front, and Club Champions of Australia.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
North Adelaide	3.5	5.6	8.12	10.13	73
Carlton	3.5	7.10	9.11	10.12	72

BEST - North Adelaide: B.Robran, Sporn, Rebbeck, Stringer, N.Sachse, Webb **Carlton:** Crane, Keogh, Nicholls, Jackson, O'Connell, Jones

SCORERS - North Adelaide: Rebbeck 4.6; Plummer 2.0; D.Sachse 1.3; Webb 1.1; Marsh, B.Robran 1.0; Hearl, N.Sachse, Von Bertouch 0.1 **Carlton:** Walls 3.2; Kennedy 2.1; Jackson, Worden 1.2; Crane, Keogh 1.1; Nicholls 1.0; Jesaulenko 0.1; rushed 0.2

ATTENDANCE: 23,213 at the Adelaide Oval

UMPIRE: Bill Deller (VFL)

NORWOOD

Club Address: 4 Woods Street, Norwood 5067, South Australia

Website: www.norwoodfc.com.au/

Home Ground: Coopers Stadium (formerly known as Norwood Oval - 'The Parade')

Formed: 1878

Colours: Navy blue and red

Emblem: Redlegs

Senior Grade Premierships: 1878-79-80-81-82-83, 1887-88-89, 1891, 1894, 1901, 1904, 1907, 1922-23, 1925, 1929, 1941, 1946, 1948, 1950, 1975, 1978, 1982, 1984, 1997, 2012-13 (29 total)

Other Premierships: Championship of Australia 1888, 1907 (2 total); Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy 1965, 1974, 1982, 1984-5-6-7, 1995-6-7-8, 2011-12 (13 total); NFL Series 1977 (1 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1956, 1958 (2 total)

Magarey Medallists: A.Green 1898; C.Perry 1915*; W.Scott 1921*, 1924 & 1930; A.Lill 1925; W.McCallum 1936; J.Marriott 1951; R.Kneebone 1966; M.Aish 1981; G.McIntosh 1994 &

1995; A.Jarman 1997; M.Thomas 2013 (10 Medallists/12 Medals)

Tassie Medallist: Graham Molloy 1969

All Australians: J.Marriott 1953; K.Wedding 1961; G.Molloy 1969; M.Aish 1983 & 1986 (5 total)

League Top Goalkickers: W.Dedman (12) 1878 & (12) 1879; J.Traynor (7) 1880; W.Duffy & J.Pollock (both 7) 1881; C.Woods (29) 1888, (55) 1891 & (46) 1892; A.Daly (88) 1893, (47) 1894, (46) 1895 & (32) 1899; W.Miller (44) 1901 & (35) 1904; R.Townsend (22) 1909; R.Bent (42) 1921, (53) 1924, (59) 1925 & (65) 1926; T.Hart (50) 1922; B.Schultz (100) 1941; P.Dalwood (70) 1946; M.Mayo (78) 1953; I.Brewer (96) 1965; M.Coligan (81) 1972; J.West (80) 1997 (25 total)

Highest Score: 33.21 (219) versus North Adelaide 10.9 (69) in round 6 1977

Most Games: 371 by Garry McIntosh from 1982 to 1998

Record Home Attendance: 20,280 in round 8 1971 at Norwood Oval: Port Adelaide 14.21 (105); Norwood 9.13 (67)

Record Finals Attendance: 58,924 for the 1957 grand final at Adelaide Oval: Port Adelaide 15.15 (105); Norwood 13.16 (94)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by the SANFL in 1998*

In "Men Of Norwood", his penetrating if brief survey of the history and famous names associated with the Norwood Football Club, Mike Coward makes the sage and telling observation that, following the establishment of the Adelaide Crows in 1991, Norwood had become "a conduit rather than a career for the most talented and ambitious."⁷² In some ways this could be interpreted as a depressing fall from grace for a club which possessed a pedigree and a reputation every bit as rich and illustrious as that of any other club in Australia. Following the admission to the AFL of Norwood's arch rivals Port Adelaide in 1997 the profile of the SANFL - and of

⁷² *Men Of Norwood* by Mike Coward, page 5.

Norwood by association - wilted still further. The fact that the Redlegs had been party to a counter bid to that of Port only served to rub proverbial salt into the wounds.⁷³ Nevertheless, the Norwood club hierarchy remained ambitious and optimistic. The powers that be at the AFL may for the time being have discounted the possibility of any more South Australian-based clubs entering their competition but longer term it would be unwise to bet against the men from the Parade occupying their 'rightful' place among the nation's elite.

The term 'rightful' is carefully chosen, and is intended to suggest the invocation of a kind of 'natural justice', the realisation - or restoration - of a state of affairs conforming to the natural order. Such an assertion is easy to defend. Right from the beginning, Norwood were successful. Indeed, the club's early years brought virtually unparalleled success. Formed at a meeting at the Norfolk Arms Hotel, Rundle Street on 28 February 1878 the club won a premiership in its debut year. With South Australia having only recently adopted the Victorian code⁷⁴ the presence in the Norwood side of a preponderance of ex-Victorians obviously contributed to the club's success, but an astute administration was arguably just as significant. Not only was the team successful at home, in 1880 it became the first South Australian combination to

⁷³ Norwood's petition to enter the AFL involved amalgamation with fellow SANFL club Sturt, which at the time was struggling for survival. In the circumstances it seems clear that Norwood would have emerged as the senior partners in a merger which would have produced an AFL side with a training base at Norwood Oval playing home matches at Football Park, and an SANFL club based at Unley and playing home games at Adelaide Oval. The chief thrust of the bid - and indeed its main virtue in the eyes of most observers - was the way in which it postulated a geographical, east versus west, basis for the city's AFL rivalry. Such a basis would have mirrored that which historically existed in the SANFL, as well as among the AFL's Melbourne-based clubs. A similar state of affairs also existed in Western Australia following Fremantle's entry to the AFL in 1995, reinforcing the traditional rivalry between Fremantle and Perth, where the state's original AFL club, West Coast, was based.

⁷⁴ See *A Game of Our Own: the Origins of Australian Football* by Geoffrey Blainey, pages 76-78.

defeat a Victorian side,⁷⁵ and over the years, as will emerge later, its record against Victorian opposition was second to none among South Australian clubs.



Norwood's 1878 premiership-winning team.

Tradition is not something which emerges overnight. Nevertheless, the building blocks which go toward creating a tradition can be laid at any time, and in the case of Norwood the process commenced immediately. One of the most identifiable Norwood trademarks was present right from the outset: for its first ever match - a 1-0 defeat of reigning premiers South Adelaide - the players donned distinctive red stockings giving rise to the nickname 'Redlegs' which has remained with the club ever since.

⁷⁵ During a 6 match tour of Victoria Norwood's record was 2 wins, 2 draws, and 2 defeats. Three years later Norwood was also successful in inflicting the first ever defeat on a visiting Victorian side after downing Essendon. A key reason for the presence in the Norwood team of a large number of Victorian players was that Arthur Diamond, a Victorian who managed the local Falk and Co. wholesale jewellery warehouse, had attached himself to the club, and was instrumental in attracting top quality footballers to Adelaide with the offer of employment.

As was alluded to earlier, the winning tradition was also swift to emerge. The 1878 flag was followed by five more in succession, and indeed before the turn of the century the club had won no fewer than eleven premierships and never once finished lower than third.

During the early years, Norwood's sternest opposition was provided by Victorian, with matches between the two sides typically close and hotly contested. Even so, the Redlegs managed to go through the entire 1878 and 1879 seasons unbeaten. When they did finally taste defeat, in 1880, it was at the hands of Victorian.⁷⁶

Football may only have been in its infancy at this time, but its participants and supporters knew how to celebrate. In the wake of a dramatic early win over 'the Vics', club patron Arthur Diamond even composed a song (to the tune of 'Killarney'):

*Then we met the sprightly Vics
With their little marks and tricks,
People thought 'twould be a fix,
Too much for the Norwoods.
But like the Souths, the Vics were licked,*

Traynor for us one goal kicked.

*Cheer the bonnie red and blue,
Cheer the colours fast and true,
Keep their honour still in view,
Forward men of Norwood.*

77

In 1888, under the captaincy of Alfred 'Topsy' Waldron⁷⁸ Norwood took on the might of VFA premiers South

⁷⁶ I am indebted for this information to Norwood Football Club historian Chris Lane.

⁷⁷ 'The Observer', 11/10/1924, page 47a.

Melbourne in a three match series at Kensington⁷⁹ which was ostensibly to determine the championship of Australia. To the surprise of most observers the Redlegs not only won the series they achieved a clean sweep of triumphs.⁸⁰

In 1889 Norwood and South Melbourne again won their respective premierships but attempts to arrange a repeat of the previous year's championship play offs fell through when the Victorians, who were entitled to home advantage, claimed - conveniently? - to be unable to find a suitable ground. Championship matches between the Victorian and South Australian premiers continued intermittently after the formation of the VFL in 1897, but the credence accorded the matches tended to vary significantly depending on where you resided.

Among the many champions to don the navy and red colours during the club's first three decades two sets of brothers - the Dalys and the Plunketts - stand out. Rover John 'Bunny' Daly was arguably Norwood's finest player of the nineteenth century, while his brother Anthony (nicknamed 'Bos') was a phenomenal spearhead in an era of generally low scores. In a game against South Adelaide during his debut season of 1893 'Bos' managed to split the uprights on no fewer than 23 occasions from 28 attempts, establishing a record which has since been equalled - by Ken Farmer in 1941 - but never bettered.

The four Plunkett brothers - Nug, Mick, Olley and Bill - all gave sterling service to the Redlegs around the turn of the century with Nug and Bill both skippering the side. In 1901 Bill managed the rare feat of playing in both the Norwood and

⁷⁸ Waldron captained Norwood in eight of the thirteen seasons between 1881 and 1893.

⁷⁹ Norwood played home games at Kensington Oval from 1878 to 1898 before moving to the Jubilee Oval for two seasons. Since 1901 the club's home base has been Norwood Oval, popularly referred to as 'the Parade'.

⁸⁰ The results of the matches were: Saturday 6/10/88 - Norwood 6.12 d. South Melbourne 4.10; Wednesday 10/10/88 - Norwood 6.8 d. South Melbourne 2.11; Saturday 13/10/88 - Norwood 6.4 d. South Melbourne 4.15. Behinds, although included in the published scores, were not actually counted until 1897.

West Perth premiership sides, while three years later he was appointed captain of Western Australia's first ever state team.

In terms of actual premiership success, Norwood found the twentieth century to be considerably less productive than the nineteenth,⁸¹ but there could be no disputing the fact that they remained one of the SANFL's two most highly renowned clubs (the other being Port Adelaide). Over the years Norwood and Port have engaged in one of football's most intense rivalries, with the origins probably going back as far as 1884 when the Portonians brought Norwood's run of six successive premierships to an end. When Norwood downed Port in an at times brutal encounter in 1894 for the right to challenge South Adelaide for the premiership the feeling between the clubs intensified still further.

Prior to 1898 the premiership was normally awarded to the team with the best overall record during the season (although, as in the 1894 instance alluded to above, there were occasional exceptions to this); since the 1898 season, however, the destiny of the flag has been decided on the basis of a single match, whether the challenge final or the grand final. The intense drama that inevitably attended such occasions served to augment specific club rivalries, most notably that between Norwood and Port. In 1901, 1904 and 1907 the two arch rivals faced one another in the ultimate match of the season with the Redlegs triumphant each time. The 1904 meeting was especially memorable, with Norwood recovering from a 35 point three quarter time deficit - a fairly substantial margin even now, but a huge one then - to win by 4 points.

Norwood's success against Victorian opposition also resumed in this era. In 1906 the team travelled to Melbourne and, to an unusually generous press evaluation, won all three

⁸¹ The introduction of electorate football in 1899, whereby players were compelled to play for the clubs based in their own electoral districts, was arguably the chief cause of Norwood's decline. Certainly the loss of players of the calibre of 1898 Magarey Medallist Alby Green, the Daly brothers, and former skipper Dick Correll dealt the club a body blow from which it was difficult to recover.

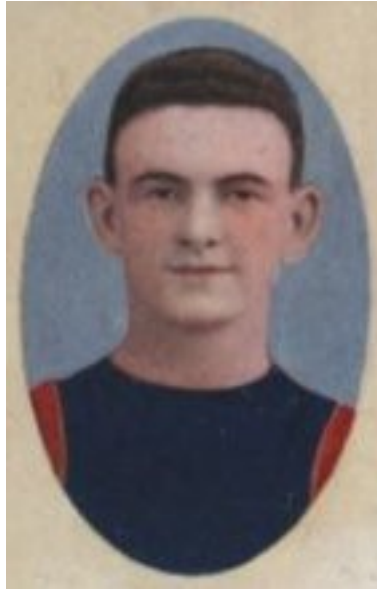
matches contested against the Ballarat Football Association, Fitzroy (2nd in that season's VFL competition) and Essendon (4th). The following season saw Norwood confront VFL premiers Carlton in Adelaide in a match designated as being for the championship of Australia. After a hard fought and high standard game Norwood proved too strong, winning 13.12 (90) to 8.9 (57) to underline their claims to be the best side in the country at the time.

It was probably the last time the club could make such a claim. In 1908, despite topping the ladder after the minor round, the club could not overcome West Adelaide in either the final or challenge final, while 3rd place in 1909 and 4th the following year represented Norwood's last involvement in the September action until 1920. Indeed, in the five seasons of league football contested between 1912 and 1919 (the SAFL going into recess between 1916 and 1918) the Redlegs managed just 14 wins from 60 starts, being consigned to the ignominy of the wooden spoon on no fewer than four occasions.

The arrival of Walter 'Wacka' Scott as a player in 1920 is often regarded as the main inspiration behind Norwood's return as a major force. Scott was one of the best and most influential half back flankers the game has known, rarely performing below par. He was in consistently sterling form in both 1920 and 1921 as the Redlegs ran 2nd, and was a prime architect of the long overdue premiership win in 1922. After entering the finals in pole position the side downed South Adelaide by 11 points in a high standard 1st semi final before overrunning West Adelaide in the final by 33 points, 9.7 (61) to a lamentable 2.16 (28). Each Norwood player received the princely sum of £4 - rare reward for the time.

The pattern was repeated the following year when South Adelaide (8.10 to 2.9) and North Adelaide (9.12 to 6.4) were vanquished in quick succession, with a South Australian finals record of 37,000 attending the second of these premiership deciders. The Redlegs' coach in both 1922 and 1923 was former West Adelaide, North Adelaide and state ruckman Tom Leahy. Not until 2012-13 would Norwood again

succeed in capturing premierships in two consecutive seasons.



Champion Redleg centreman Alick Lill.

Norwood finished 3rd in 1924 but were back in premiership form in 1925. It was a real struggle this time though as Sturt in a semi final (7 points) and West Torrens in the final (1 point) offered stern resistance. Norwood was captain-coached on this occasion by veteran centreman Sid White, who before the first world war had twice won the club's best and fairest award, and in the seasons immediately following its cessation was a regular member of South Australian interstate teams. White was widely regarded as "an entirely satisfactory leader. Not only (did) he direct the team well.....he invariably (played) a determined and skilful

game, coming through the crushes in great style."⁸² Not for nothing is the first half of the 1920s often looked back on as 'the Sid White Era' (the immensity of Walter Scott's contribution notwithstanding).

Walter Scott took over coaching responsibilities from Sid White in 1926 and the club's position at the forefront of South Australian football was maintained. With Scott himself at the peak of his playing prowess,⁸³ aided and abetted by players of the ilk of centreman Alick Lill (123 games and three club champion awards between 1923 and 1931, plus the 1925 Magarey Medal) and resolute full back Syd Ackland (133 games in ten seasons) the side enjoyed a 61% success rate over the next five seasons, playing off for the premiership on two occasions. The 1928 season brought a magnificent 8.13 (61) to 3.2 (20) semi final win over minor premiers Port Adelaide but when the pressure intensified a fortnight later in the challenge final the Redlegs, inexplicably, were found wanting. A year later, however, it was Norwood's turn to benefit from the challenge system when it thrashed the Magpies 16.14 (110) to 10.9 (69) before 35,504 spectators in the premiership decider having earlier succumbed by just 2 points to West Adelaide in a semi final.

The image of Norwood as a stable, family club does not withstand much scrutiny when one examines its record during the 1930s. During the ten year period between 1931 and 1940 the club used no fewer than ten different coaches, including four in a single season in 1935. Despite this, its on field record was not bad: it qualified for the finals in all bar two seasons, and while there were no further premierships, and indeed only one grand final appearance,⁸⁴ the side was almost always competitive. Among the champion players to

⁸² From 'The SA Footballer', 19/8/22, page 17.

⁸³ Scott won the Norwood best and fairest award in 1926, 1928 and 1930 (taking his number of wins overall to six) and was a virtual ever present on the half back line of South Australia's interstate representative teams for whom he made an all-time record 39 appearances between 1920 and 1932.

⁸⁴ In 1933 Norwood lost the grand final by 23 points against West Torrens.

don the navy blue and red during this era were centreman Albert 'Pongo' Sawley, the McCallum brothers -1936 Magarey Medallist Bill (who played all over the ground during his eleven season league career, but won the Medal as a centreman) and ruckman Perc, and forwards Tom Warhurst and Bruce Schultz, the latter of whom, in 1941, became the first ever Norwood player to register 100 goals in a season.

Schultz's emergence, and the arrival at the Parade in 1940 of a young rover from Maitland by the name of Jack Oatey, coincided with something of a resurrection in Norwood's fortunes. Jack Oatey is probably best remembered for his achievements as a coach but he was also a footballer of the highest order, polished, purposeful and precise. He won Norwood's best and fairest award in his debut season, and repeated the achievement the following year when he was also runner-up (by 3 votes) to Glenelg's Marcus Boyall in the Magarey Medal.

After finishing 4th in 1940 Norwood won the minor premiership in 1941 and was warmly favoured for the flag, but after putting in a calamitous display against Sturt in the 2nd semi final (it lost by 71 points) its backers fell away like dead fleas off a horse's back. A 25 point preliminary final defeat of West Adelaide restored some confidence but it would be fair to suggest that most of the 30,742 spectators who turned up at the Adelaide Oval for the grand final expected to witness a Double Blue triumph. The Redlegs, though, had learned from the debacle of a fortnight previously and, by raising both their intensity and skill levels, managed to make their Sturt opponents look subdued, vacillating, and intermittently inept. By three quarter time Norwood had the game, and the flag, in their keeping, having established a lead of 11.10 (76) to 5.9 (39), and although the Double Blues managed 5.2 to 3.6 in the final term the only effect this had was to give the final scoreline a semblance of respectability. At the final siren the scoreboard read Norwood 14.16 (100) to Sturt 10.11 (71); for the first time in twelve seasons the premiership pennant would be unfurled at the Parade.

Norwood would retain its position as South Australia's premier football club for another three seasons, but only because the SANFL's administration felt impelled, by the exigencies of war, to place its full scale senior competition into recess. Between 1942 and 1944 a restricted competition took place which involved the eight league clubs pairing off on broadly geographical lines. Norwood joined forces with North Adelaide during this period and the Norwood-North Adelaide combination, decked out in the red and white playing uniforms of the northerners, proved to be the most successful of the four temporary partnerships, with premierships in 1943 and 1944. On this basis, and taking into account the comparatively weak pre- and post-war showings of North Adelaide, a reasonably strong case could be concocted for Norwood being the SANFL club most injuriously affected by the intervention of war. Not that such facile conjecture affords anything more than the most miniscule consolation to the club's supporters.

Jack Oatey, having fine-tuned his tactical knowledge during a wartime stint with South Melbourne in the VFL, was appointed Norwood's captain-coach in 1945. Aged just twenty-four, Oatey was not greeted with universal acclaim by his team mates, and indeed throughout his coaching tenure at the Parade there were some who persisted in viewing him with distrust. In part this was because Oatey was an immensely self-confident, forthright young man who was constitutionally antipathetic to the 'politics of consensus' by means of which most Australian football clubs of the time tended to operate. Paradoxically, this same forthrightness, when applied to the coaching sphere, was one of Oatey's strengths, and a primary reason for his success.

After spending his first season, during which Norwood finished 3rd, tightening his autocratic grip on team affairs, Oatey in 1946 spearheaded his charges to an emphatically memorable premiership. The team lost only 3 times all season, and in both the 2nd semi final and grand final was much too strong for perennial arch rivals and reigning premiers, Port Adelaide. On grand final day, with a record

crowd of 53,473 in attendance, the Redlegs never remotely looked in any danger after notching 4 opening term goals to nil. With centreman Blackmore, centre half back Holliday, 5 goal ruckman Dalwood, and the irrepressible Oatey himself all prominent Norwood eventually won by 28 points, 13.14 (92) to 9.10 (64).

As far as most folk at the Parade were concerned the 1947 season ought to have brought successive flags. Certainly the Redlegs were by some measure the most impressive team during the minor round, which they ended with a 15-2 record, 2 wins ahead of Port Adelaide, and 5 clear of both Sturt and West Adelaide. A 3 point 2nd semi final defeat of the Magpies was hard work, but it engendered that all important week's rest, and did nothing to diminish Norwood's favouritism in most people's eyes. Surprisingly, however, it was not Port Adelaide which qualified to meet the Redlegs in the grand final a fortnight later, but the largely unheralded West Adelaide, which had not participated in the ultimate game of the season for twenty years. Having already achieved finals wins over Sturt (by 59 points) and Port (by 38 points) the westerners felt they had nothing to fear, and on a rain-soaked afternoon they seized the initiative from the start and never allowed their more highly feted opponents leeway to respond. At the final siren the scoreboard showed West victorious by a margin of 5 straight goals, 10.15 (75) to 5.15 (45), and while no one at Norwood begrudged their opponents victory (at least not openly), there was a universal feeling that this was one flag which ought never to have been let slip. Jack Oatey in particular did not react well. "There was no worse company than Jack after we'd lost a grand final," observed Redlegs centreman Sam Gallagher, "and no better when we won."⁸⁵

Oatey was good company twelve months later after the Redlegs overwhelmed West Torrens by 57 points in the 1948 grand final, thereby avenging a 3 point 2nd semi final reversal and 'coming of age' by securing the twenty-first

⁸⁵ Quoted in "Jack Oatey: Coach of a Lifetime", page 10.

premiership in their history. Norwood led by 4 goals at quarter time only for Torrens to mount a strong, if somewhat wayward, comeback in the 2nd term to move within 9 points at the long break. It looked to be anybody's game but Oatey rallied his charges during the half time interval and the 2nd half brought almost constant one way traffic with Norwood adding 10.10 to 3.7 to win with consummate ease. Centre half forward Ron Williams, who booted 4 goals, was most people's selection as best afield in an even team display by the Redlegs.

Torrens achieved a measure of revenge by ousting Norwood from premiership contention at the preliminary final stage the following year but 1950 brought the inevitable Oatey backlash inspiring the Redlegs to pole position prior to the finals. One of the SANFL's perennial underachievers up to that point in the shape of Glenelg had provided Norwood with its sternest challenge for most of the season, ultimately finishing just 2 points adrift of the Redlegs in 2nd spot. Then, in the 2nd semi final, with the stakes at their highest for the season, it looked for long periods as though the Tigers were going to advance straight to the grand final at Norwood's expense. Ultimately, however, it was the Redlegs' greater experience which told as they edged home - scarcely deservedly according to many in the media - by 5 points.

A fortnight later a completely different scenario unfolded as Norwood had a goal on the board within 10 seconds of the start and thereafter there was only one team in it. With full back Ron Reimann keeping Glenelg's century goalkicker Colin Churchett to just 1.3 for the afternoon the Bays' major avenue to goal was blocked off, and elsewhere on the ground players like Tilbrook, Olds, Oatey, Blackmore and Marriott were in iridescent touch. By quarter time Norwood led 7.5 to 2.2 and thereafter it was only a question of how great the Redlegs' eventual margin of victory would be. In the end it was 47 points, but the really important statistic was that this was yet another premiership to add to the club's already impressive record.

Few people leaving the Adelaide Oval late that grand final afternoon could conceivably have guessed that they had just witnessed Norwood's last successful tilt at the premiership for a quarter of a century. Not that the demise was a precipitous one. Over the course of the next decade Norwood failed on only two occasions to contest the finals, and went within a game of the flag in 1952, 1955, 1957 and 1960. Overall, the side's success rate of 53% was bettered only by Port Adelaide (which won no fewer than seven of the ten premierships on offer), and West Adelaide. However, increasingly there was a feeling that the side lacked the desperation, toughness and ferocity which had always been synonymous with flag success in Victoria, and which were becoming increasingly vital ingredients in South Australia as well. In hindsight, it is also feasible to suggest that Jack Oatey's departure at the end of the 1956 season represented a body blow from which the club would need a good deal of time to recover. Oatey went to West Adelaide, where he achieved much (though not, alas, a premiership) with limited resources, and thence to Sturt where he eked out a reputation as arguably the greatest South Australian coach of the twentieth century.

The 1960s would witness a further decline, and indeed would constitute arguably the club's most inauspicious era. In the ten year period between 1961 and 1970 the Redlegs contested just one grand final, and were September protagonists on only two other occasions. In 1968 they ended up last in what by this stage was a ten team competition, arguably the club's most ignominious return in more than 120 seasons of League and Association football.

That said, the Parade was still home to many prodigious talents. Both ruckman John Marriott (1951) and defender Ron Kneebone (1966) won Magarey Medals, while high-flying Graham Molloy became, in 1969, the first South Australian state representative to land a Tassie Medal. Other notable players to don the navy and red included 1961 All Australian ruckman 'Big Bill' Wedding, who won the club champion award five times in succession, ebullient rover

Haydn Bunton junior, livewire wingman and triple club best and fairest Doug Olds, the elegant and versatile Peter Aish (father of 1981 Magarey Medallist, Michael), former Collingwood goalsneak Ian Brewer, highly skilled but often underrated wingmen Denis Modra and Peter Vertudaches, and Robert Oatey who, like his father, was a tenacious and highly skilled rover. Even in the club's darkest hours during the late 1960s crowds still flocked to watch Norwood in action; indeed, the club's record verifiable crowd of 20,280 was set in 1971,⁸⁶ which would prove to be the sixth season in succession that the Redlegs failed to contest the finals series.



"Big Bill" Wedding.

The following season, however, brought the first step out of the mire. Norwood qualified for the finals in 4th place, and although the 1st semi final against Central District was lost, it would be another twenty seasons before the Redlegs

⁸⁶ On 18 May 1955 a crowd estimated to be in the region of 21,000 people attended Norwood's home game against Sturt, but this was before the days of precise counting of attendances at suburban SANFL ovals.

again failed to participate in the major round. During that twenty year period only Port Adelaide would win more premierships and enjoy a better overall success rate.



The action captured in the above photograph epitomises the team spirit at Norwood as Bob Oatey's perfect shepherd allows teammate Bob Kite ample time to handball to Brian Sawley.

The foundations of Norwood's return to pre-eminence were laid by Robert Oatey, who coached the club, for an ostensibly miserly return of just two finals appearances, between 1968 and 1973. Like his father, Jack, Robert Oatey placed the onus clearly and irrevocably on skill. Players spent long hours at training ironing out perceived deficiencies, ensuring that they could dispose of the ball equally well with both feet (and, indeed, with both hands), and performing drills aimed at augmenting teamwork rather than self-reliance. The result was a gradual, season by season improvement which meant that, when former North Adelaide champion Bob

Hammond took over from Oatey as senior coach in 1974, he inherited a squad with genuine premierships credentials. If there was a missing ingredient, at least according to the popular contemporary perception, it was that the players, despite their undoubted skill, were mentally weak, and exhibited a concomitant tendency to crumble under pressure. What they needed was a mentor with personal experience of coping successfully with the type and level of pressure which confronted teams at finals time. Enter the aforementioned Bob Hammond, a triple premiership player with North Adelaide and arguably one of the toughest players in the state over the preceding decade and a half, to instil that 'missing something' into the mix, transforming a team of 'bridesmaids' into 'brides' in the process.

Superficially persuasive as this viewpoint might seem the truth was probably a trifle more mundane. In players like Phil Carman, Ross Dillon, Jim Michalanne, John Wynne, Neil Button, Roger Woodcock and Mike Poulter Norwood already had the nucleus of a flag-winning combination. In 1975, the increased maturity of these players, coupled with the arrival of two highly talented defenders in the shape of Rodney Pope (from West Adelaide) and Stephen Kerley (from Melbourne) gave the side the final necessary impetus to manoeuvre it from the status of contenders to that of bona fide champions.

Despite Norwood's finishing the 1975 minor round at the head of the ladder with only 2 defeats it was Glenelg, which during the season had scored a large number of substantial victories, that was widely favoured for the flag. This favouritism was reinforced following a high quality 2nd semi final which saw the Bays move straight into the grand final after comprehensively defeating the Redlegs by 29 points, 21.9 (135) to 16.10 (106).

Losing in the 2nd semi final has often been seen in hindsight as affording a much needed impetus to eventual premiership-winning combinations (although it could equally be argued that the team which wins the 2nd semi final tends to accord an exaggerated degree of significance to the achievement which spawns complacency a fortnight later).

Whatever the reason, Norwood in 1975 quickly recovered from its disappointment by outclassing Port Adelaide 11.19 (85) to 8.7 (55) in the preliminary final, giving the pundits considerable pause for thought before the grand final rematch with Glenelg.



Bob Oatey

After a season of high scores and gargantuan winning margins⁸⁷ the final game of the year was atypical in the extreme. In front of 53,283 spectators Norwood and Glenelg waged an all out war of attrition with neither side able to establish a decisive break at any juncture. Overall, however, the Redlegs appeared to have the edge in both desperation and incisiveness; they led for most of the afternoon, and when the final siren sounded the scoreboard showed a difference of two straight kicks between the sides, in Norwood's favour. Scarcely a classic grand final, it was, nevertheless, as far as

⁸⁷ Glenelg's total of 49.23 (317) against Central District on 23 August, for example, remains an Australian record in what used to be referred to as "first class football".

the navy and red fraternity was concerned, an extremely memorable one, ending as it did an unprecedented period of a quarter of a century in the football wilderness. Final scores showed Norwood 9.10 (64); Glenelg 7.10 (52), with ruckmen Neil Button and Michael Gregg, centreman Rod Seekamp, wingman Glen Rosser, and half backs Rodney Pope and Stephen Kerley among the leading lights for the victors. For Redlegs coach Bob Hammond it must have been difficult to decide which was the overriding emotion, elation or relief. Among the 3,000 or so Norwood aficionados who converged on the Parade later that evening were many who, two years earlier, had openly and vociferously questioned Hammond's appointment, but dissenting voices now were conspicuous by their absence.

The weekend after the grand final saw the last ever Australian club championships with the premiers of South Australia, the VFL and Western Australia together with the Tasmanian state champions competing in a knock-out series at Football Park. Drawn to play Glenorchy in their opening match the Redlegs failed to impress, allowing their opponents to move within 10 points during the final term before scratching out a tentative 12.20 (92) to 8.11 (59) victory. Their performance against North Melbourne in the final was even worse: after a closely fought opening term the Kangaroos went on to annihilate Norwood, with the hefty final margin of 76 points, if anything, flattering the losers. Norwood's hard won kudos had been seriously tarnished.

The team's reputation in the national sphere would improve somewhat over the next couple of years, however. In 1976 the National Football League introduced a championship series involving leading VFL, SANFL and WAFL clubs, and Norwood made an immediate impact by consigning VFL heavyweight Carlton to its heaviest ever senior defeat up to that point (106 points) en route to a semi final 'revenge' meeting with North Melbourne. Once again, the Kangaroos emerged victorious, but this time the margin was just 18 points, and Norwood exited the competition with dignity intact. Many of the NFL matches, including Norwood's clashes with

both Carlton and North Melbourne, were played at Norwood Oval, under lights.

In 1977, in a competition which admittedly had been devalued somewhat by the defection of the VFL contingent, the Redlegs went all the way with wins against an ACT Combined Team, Port Melbourne, Sturt and, in the grand final, East Perth⁸⁸ to secure prize money to the value of \$50,000.

Satisfying as Norwood's achievements on the national stage were there was a feeling, promulgated by Bob Hammond among others, that they represented something of an undesirable distraction from the club's primary objective, which as always was the winning of the SANFL premiership. After seeing his side finish 4th in 1976 and 5th in 1977 Hammond was determined that, in 1978 - Norwood's centenary year - the players' assault on football's 'holy grail' should be absolute, exhaustless and unswerving.

It was. Indeed, a Hollywood script writer could not have concocted a more heroic scenario than that which unravelled over the concluding weeks of the 1978 SANFL season. Having sustained just 1 loss for the year, and having won most of its games by substantial margins, Sturt was almost unbackable for the flag. Norwood, which had lost 7 times, figured in few pundits' post-season calculations, and when it succumbed 'inevitably' to Sturt in the 2nd semi final (having earlier played well in the qualifying final to overcome Glenelg) no one other than the most ardent, one-eyed Redleg barracker would have given more than a few cents for the team's chances of taking out the '78 premiership.

Just as three years earlier Norwood faced arch rivals Port Adelaide in the preliminary final, and despite falling behind early on it ultimately emerged victorious by 34 points. Bob Loveday, skipper of the West Adelaide team which had inflicted the Double Blues' only defeat of the season, felt he

⁸⁸ Norwood won a controversial and spiteful match 10.9 (69) to 9.7 (61) which gave rise to allegations of 'home town umpiring' from the sandgropers.

had seen enough in the Redlegs' display to prompt him to 'go against the tide' in tipping the destiny of the flag:

*".....I think Norwood's win over Port last week will be a real confidence booster for them. It was such an efficient win. They were about five goals down at one stage but they didn't panic. They methodically put their game together and the players have obviously got a lot of confidence in each other. Man for man, Norwood can match Sturt. The only deficiency in Norwood's team as I see it is a spearhead. But they've got more overall experience.....enough experience to win the grand final."*⁸⁹

The 1978 SANFL grand final, played in front of 50,867 spectators, was one of the most dramatic, emotional and exciting games in Australian football. With the aid of a strong breeze Sturt comprehensively dominated affairs in the opening term but poor kicking for goal meant that it led by 'only' 28 points at the first change, 5.9 to 1.5. The Redlegs rallied somewhat in the 2nd quarter, adding 4.5 to 3.6, but the Double Blues still looked to be in charge, and although they continued to kick poorly in the 3rd term (adding 4.6 to 4 straight goals) there was nothing in the general pattern of play to suggest that Norwood, trailing as they did by 29 points at lemon time, and having managed just 19 scoring shots compared with 33, could turn things 'round in the final term.

In the opening five minutes of the last quarter, however, Norwood exploded into life. Goals by Craig, Gallagher and Adamson gave notice that the game was far from over, and when Greg Turbill chipped in with 2 more to bring the Redlegs within a single straight kick of their opponents' score Football Park was at fever pitch. Minutes later John Wynne, who earlier in the match had careered into the Sturt coaching box and attempted to intimidate opposition coach Jack Oatey, booted the goal which put the Redlegs in front. From here on a game which hitherto had flowed freely

⁸⁹ Quoted in 'The South Australian Football Budget', volume 53, number 29, 30/9/78.

suddenly became tense and tight, with scoring at a premium. Tony Burgan's goal after twenty-four minutes finally broke the deadlock, propelling Sturt back into the lead, but five minutes later Phil Gallagher kicked what proved to be the final goal of the game after being somewhat fortuitously awarded a mark by umpire Des Foster. The game dragged on for another four minutes during which the Double Blues threw everything they had at the Norwood defence, but with backline players like Danny Jenkins and Michael Taylor performing heroically, there was no addition to the score. Impossibly, seemingly against all the odds, Norwood had won by the narrowest of margins, 16.15 (111) to 14.26 (110). Best for the Redlegs was young skipper Michael Taylor, with other fine performances coming from Neil Craig, Brian Adamson, Mick Nunan (ironically, a former Sturt champion), Neil Button and Glen Rosser. For coach Bob Hammond and the 5,000 or so supporters who gathered at Norwood Oval on the evening of the match the celebratory champagne probably never tasted better.

The Norwood Football Club was now incontrovertibly a member of what was widely perceived as South Australian football's 'Big Four', along with Glenelg, Port Adelaide and Sturt. Between them these four clubs won every SANFL premiership between 1974 and 1982 and occupied 17 out of 18 grand final places, with the Redlegs' record during that period second only to Port Adelaide.

It was Port Adelaide which stood in Norwood's way when the Redlegs, now coached by former Richmond identity Neil Balme, were next involved in the grand final action in 1980, and, despite a tenacious effort for three quarters by the men from the Parade, it was ultimately the Magpies who prevailed.

It was a different story in 1982. With Neil Balme still at the helm, and having qualified for the major round in 3rd spot, Norwood enjoyed an uninterrupted procession to the flag with finals wins over Sturt (by 8 points), Port Adelaide (by 19 points) and, in an anti-climactic grand final, Glenelg (by 62 points). The win against the Tigers was closely fought for

much of the first half but after the long break the Redlegs outscored their opponents 13.8 to 6.10. Garry McIntosh, a player who would develop into one of Norwood's greatest ever servants, was best afield in the grand final, with sterling support coming from Turbill, Jenkins, Neagle, Winter, Thiel and Stemper.

The 1984 season brought yet another chapter in one of football's longest-running and most intense rivalries when minor premiers and warm pre-match favourites Port Adelaide fronted up against rank outsiders Norwood, which had qualified for the finals in 5th place,⁹⁰ in the SANFL grand final before 50,271 diehard fans at Football Park. South Australian football has undoubtedly produced better and more exciting matches, but few as bruising or intense. Norwood outplayed Port in the opening term to rattle on 4 goals to 1 but after that it became an evenly matched game and by the final change it was the Magpies who narrowly held sway (by 3 points) and who looked to be playing marginally the better football. However, if Norwood in 1984 possessed one quality above all others it was a never-say-die spirit. On one occasion during the minor round it had trailed West Torrens by 41 points at three quarter time and got up to win, while in both the 1st semi final (against Central District) and the preliminary final (against Glenelg) it had recovered from decidedly uncomfortable positions to edge home to victory. It would be no different in the grand final as Norwood raised the last quarter pressure to a level of intensity with which the Magpies could not cope, adding 4.2 to 2.2 to claim the flag by 9 points. Keith Thomas was best afield, with Neville Roberts (6 goals, taking his season's tally to 106), Craig Balme, Michael Aish and Bruce Winter also prominent. In taking out the premiership from 5th position in a competition with a 'final five' system of playing finals Norwood established a record which still stands. After the grand final, coach Neil Balme, when making his traditional post-match visit to the opposition

⁹⁰ After 6 games of the 1984 season Norwood languished in 8th spot with just 1 win. Thereafter it made a creditable recovery, winning 12 of its final 16 minor round games, but few of its performances bore the premiership patent.

dressing room, told the Magpie players that "playing Port was the reason Norwood won".

Despite near perennial finals participation there would be no further grand final appearances for Norwood until 1993, by which time the entire football landscape had changed significantly. Besides the arrival on the scene of the Adelaide Crows, the SANFL competition itself had seen changes, not least of which was the amalgamation at the end of the 1990 season of the Woodville and West Torrens Football Clubs. This new combination, popularly referred to simply as 'the Eagles',⁹¹ proved to be a power from the start, and in the 1993 grand final they contemptuously brushed aside the challenge of Neil Craig's Redlegs by 73 points. Not since 1952, when it lost to North Adelaide by a record 108 points, had Norwood succumbed in a grand final by anything like so disquieting a margin.

The Redlegs enjoyed near consummate supremacy in 1997 losing only twice during the minor round and finishing with a club record percentage of 66.93%.⁹² On occasions, such as in their 122 point ANZAC Day annihilation of Port Adelaide, the Redlegs produced football of near AFL quality but then, as so often seems to happen, they received a peremptory wake-up call in the 2nd semi final, which they somehow contrived to lose to the Magpies by 22 points. A scratchy 11 point win over Central District in the preliminary final the following week intensified the doubters' murmurings, but on the day that really mattered, grand final day, with a large crowd of 44,161 looking on, Norwood played with irresistible cohesion, purpose and skill to record a runaway victory. With midfielders like Anthony Harvey (Jack Oatey Medallist), John Cunningham and Andrew Jarman in radiant touch the Redlegs had their Magpie opponents chasing shadows all afternoon as they chiselled out a win by precisely the margin with which they had lost in 1993, 73 points. The

⁹¹ The official name of the new ensemble, which played its home games at Woodville Oval, was the Woodville-West Torrens Football Club.

⁹² Port Adelaide's 1914 unbeaten champions of Australia with 67.68% was the only team ever to have recorded a better season's percentage.

final scoreline of 19.12 (126) to 7.11 (53) in Norwood's favour represented Port Adelaide's heaviest ever grand final defeat and, coming as it did in the very season that Port's controversial bid to enter a team in the AFL had come to fruition, the satisfaction it generated among the 'red and blue army' was, understandably, almost illimitable.

Things were much less satisfactory two years later, however, when Norwood, having - in an echo of 1984 - just scraped into the major round in 5th place, next qualified for the grand final. Once again the opposition was provided by Port Adelaide, but on this occasion the premiership cup was destined for Alberton. The Redlegs battled hard, despite being comparatively undermanned, but in the vital closing moments it was the Magpies who steadied to eke out a narrow but warranted 14.17 (101) to 14.9 (93) victory.

Following the 1999 grand final, Norwood endured an unaccustomedly hard time, even succumbing to a rare wooden spoon in 2004 (only the sixth in the club's history, and the first since 1968). The 2006 and 2007 seasons witnessed marginal improvement, but in neither year was the club sufficiently consistent to mount a realistic bid for finals participation. The Redlegs eventually reached the finals for the first time in six seasons in 2008, finishing 4th, but this was followed by a disappointing slump to 7th place in 2009. Since then, however, the club has reassumed its customary place as a league pace-setter. In 2010, the Redlegs qualified for the grand final for the first time in the twenty-first century, and came within a single straight kick of upsetting warm pre-match favourite Central District, a club which was contesting its eleventh consecutive premiership decider. A drop to 3rd place followed in 2011 but in both 2012 and 2013 the Redlegs were far and away the competition's most powerful side, scoring comfortable grand final wins over West Adelaide in the former season and North Adelaide in the latter. As was mentioned earlier, this was the first time since 1922-3 that Norwood had achieved back to back senior grade premierships.

Despite its barely tolerable status as a 'conduit' therefore, the Norwood Football Club remains one of

Australia's proudest and most famous. Indeed, it could be argued that being a large fish in a medium-sized pond is preferable to being a minnow in the mighty ocean of the AFL - or, to put it another way, there is very possibly more chance of Norwood still being around in ten or a dozen years time than there is of the AFL still having its present complement of ten Victorian-based clubs.

The First Grand Final

1889 SAFA Premiership Play-Off: Norwood vs. Port Adelaide

Uniquely Australian, and a quintessential element in the great Australian game, a grand final is like nothing else in sport. For the two teams involved, a whole season's commitment, aspiration and hard work is laid on the line in a 'winner takes all' finale that pays no heed whatsoever to previous form or achievement. In today's AFL it is theoretically possible, though somewhat unlikely, for a team finishing as low on the ladder as 8th after the home and away series to end up earning the right to call itself the best in the land. In the SANFL in 1984, Norwood, which qualified for the major round in 5th place with 13 wins, thereafter managed to win 4 successive finals games to annex the premiership, beating minor premier Port Adelaide, which had won 4 more minor round matches, in the premiership decider. More recently, AFL club Adelaide won the 1998 flag despite beginning its finals campaign 5 places and 3 wins below eventual grand final opponents North Melbourne; moreover, it began its finals campaign with a loss to Melbourne, while North won both its pre-grand final matches comfortably. Other examples of this sort of thing abound, but the point being made is that grand finals are games apart, completely different from and much more important than any other games. To qualify for a grand final is to qualify for equal

rights, in a football sense, with past performances - other than their residual, non-quantifiable impact on factors such as morale and confidence - completely irrelevant.

Yet finals football, and grand finals in particular, only became part of football's essential fabric very gradually. In major competitions like the VFA and SAFA the premiership was, for many years, awarded to the team which finished the home and away series of matches at the head of the ladder, a system which was later emulated in English soccer. In 1896, the top two teams in the VFL, Collingwood and South Melbourne, could not be separated on the basis of wins achieved, and so it was decided that the destiny of the premiership would be determined on the basis of a single, 'winner takes all', play-off match. Collingwood duly defeated South Melbourne to take out the 1896 flag, but of much greater long term significance was the enormous interest, and substantial revenue, that the match generated.

Meanwhile, in the background, discussions were taking place between a number of the VFA's stronger clubs with a view to establishing an elite, breakaway competition, discussions which eventually led to the formation of the VFL the following year. This new organisation was quick to discern the potential benefits (in terms of pounds, shillings and pence) of using a play-off system to determine each year's premiers, and from its very first season of operation the VFL implemented what it called a 'final round' involving the teams which finished the home and away series occupying the top 4 places on the ladder. In 1897, this final round was conducted on an all play all, or round robin, basis, but attendances were disappointing, with an aggregate scarcely in excess of 30,000 spectators attending the 6 matches. Unfortunately, the round robin format lacked the immediacy and drama that had so appealed to fans attending the 1896 play-off between Collingwood and South Melbourne, and sensing this, in 1898 the VFL began to utilise the first in a variety of finals systems which shared the common element of

culminating in a single, decisive play-off.⁹³ Other major competitions soon followed the VFL's lead: the SAFA implemented a finals system in 1898, for example, the VFA in 1903, and the WAFA in 1904. For well over a century therefore, the now familiar concept of a series of play-off matches, incorporating some kind of handicap system,⁹⁴ and culminating in a single, conclusive premiership-deciding match, has been as integral a feature of the Australian game as the high mark, the unique scoring system, the hand pass and the importunate bagging of umpires.

Although the VFL can, in a sense, lay claim to having 'invented' finals football, the very first premiership-deciding match in a major competition took place on Saturday 5 October 1889 in the colony of South Australia. It involved reigning Australian champions Norwood and Port Adelaide, and came about because the two clubs concerned had finished the season with identical win-loss ratios. The match was extremely well received, and it would be hard to imagine its not having played a significant part in informing the minds of those who oversaw the implementation of the VFL's finals series less than a decade later.

The match also contributed in no small measure to the development of the intense rivalry between Port Adelaide and Norwood which exists to this day.

Contemporary Match Preview⁹⁵

For the first time in the history of South Australian football it has become necessary to play off for the premiership, and today on the Adelaide Oval the Norwoods - last

⁹³ That is, with the single exception of 1924, when the round robin format was resurrected, with similarly disastrous consequences in terms of attendances.

⁹⁴ Initially, this tended to consist of allowing the minor premier the 'right of challenge', whereby if it was defeated at any stage during the finals it could claim a 'second chance' in a decisive play-off against the winner of the final. The concept of the second chance, in various forms, would be retained in all future finals systems.

⁹⁵ From 'The Register', 5/10/1889.

year's premiers - and the Ports - the second team of 1888 - meet to wrestle for the much-coveted position.



Adelaide Oval, pictured during the late 1880s with a football match is in progress.

Extraordinary interest has been excited in the match, and a huge sum of money is staked, the ports being slightly the favourites, especially among the smaller backers, but the Norwoods have a host of backers.

The clubs have met four times.....this season, the Norwoods winning two, losing one, while the other was drawn; but no inference as to today's game can be safely drawn from these results, as it is to be admitted on all hands that the Ports have considerably improved during the last few months, while the Norwoods lately have not been in such form as they were when they won two matches.

Mr. J.J. Trait, who is acknowledged to be the best umpire in Australia, will act in the match, and as he is specially known for his strong determination to put down rough play at all costs there is very little probability of the disgraceful play which characterised the last match between these clubs.

If the weather only keeps fine the attendance should be even greater than on the last occasion.

The Norwood team is slightly different to that which did battle for them before, and it has been somewhat improved by the substitution of McGrath, O. Bertram, and Roachock for Haldane, Honner and McCarthy.

On the other hand, the only alteration in the Ports' twenty is that Lowe takes Miller's place.

The chosen teams are:

NORWOOD: R.M. Bertram O. Bertram, Combe, Dixon, Daly, Guster, Grayson, Jackson, McKee, McGaffin, McGrath, Rawson, Roberts, Roachock, Shaw, Slattery, J.J. Woods, C.W. Woods, Wilson, Waldron

PORT ADELAIDE: A. Bushby, W. Bushby, Correll, Davis, Ewers, C. Fry, J. Fry, Gardiner, Hamilton, Hills, Kempster, Le Leu, Lowe, J. McKenzie, K. McKenzie, Miers, Phillips, Stephens, Tomlin, Webb

Special trains will leave the Port at 1.55pm and 2.08pm, in addition to the ordinary trains, and a special will leave town after the match, at 5.55pm.

Contemporary Match Report⁹⁶

PREMIERSHIP FOOTBALL MATCH

ADELAIDE OVAL

TODAY

at 2.45 pm

NORWOOD V. PORT

FIELD UMPIRE - Mr. J. Trait

GOAL UMPIRES - Messrs. I.A. Fisher and J. McKenzie

Note:-Port and Norwood Club Tickets admit, also S.A.C.A. Football Tickets

Grand, 6d.; Reserve, 6d. extra

1st Quarter

⁹⁶ From 'The Register', 7/10/1889.

The much talked-of match between the Norwoods and Ports for the premiership came off on the Adelaide Oval on Saturday afternoon. For weeks past both teams have been training assiduously, and they entered the field in the pink of condition. Both clubs were content to take level money, although some of the supporters - principally of the Ports - laid odds on, but when the game started the Norwoods were slightly the favourites.

The very strongest teams that could possibly be got together were selected, and the eastern club had the best combination they have had this season. Special trains from the Port brought up large numbers of spectators, and when the ball was set going there were quite 10,000 people on the ground. The official figures show that 7,227 paid, and the balance was made up of tickets. Both pavilions were crowded to their fullest extent. The members' reserve was also filled, and the mounds in front of the buildings were packed with people.

The Norwoods entered the field first, being received with applause, and then a loud cheer greeted Mr. J.J. Trait, the crack Australian umpire. The Ports were not long following, and from the cries that assailed them it was evident that their supporters had rallied in force.

When the two teams took their places there was little to choose between them, and it is questionable whether ever before any two so evenly matched clubs had assembled on the Adelaide Oval.

The conditions for a good game could scarcely have been improved upon. The ground was in splendid trim, but a fairly strong wind blew across the ground towards the bridge. No delay was experienced in getting to work.

The Norwoods having secured the wind at six minutes past three, J. McKenzie sent the leather down towards the north goal, and from the very first both teams went into the game at a terrific pace.

QUARTER TIME: Norwood 3.1; Port Adelaide 3.1 (behinds recorded, but not counting towards a team's score)

2nd Quarter

All the first quarter the play had been terribly fast, every man doing good service. There was not the slightest difference between the teams, both of them giving a magnificent exhibition, the marking and kicking being perfect.

The Ports with the aid of the wind were the first to attack (during the second quarter), but Jackson warded off. Shaw and Roberts troubled the Ports' back line, and C. Woods receiving a free on the boundary from a very difficult angle made the Norwoods' goal total four.

On kicking off, some very bad attempts at marking by the Norwoods let in Gardiner, and he sent forward. Roberts, who was marking excellently, despatched back to the centre, but K. McKenzie with a long kick sent it forward again, and the ball went over to the gate, remaining on that wing for some time.

Ewers was prominent, and Kempster met all attacks. Combe and Daly kept the goal out of danger on their end, and then the Ports tried the other wing, and worked the ball across to the pavilion, where Stevens who was working very hard in the ruck showed up, and after the sphere had traversed the ground, Hills tried a shot, and the ball passed just outside the post.

When the welcome spell came to the men, the figures on the board read -

HALF TIME: Norwood 4.1; Port Adelaide 3.3

3rd Quarter

During the first half the wind had gradually shifted around, and was blowing across the gate. After the interval the Ports were the first to open aggressive tactics.

The Ports put all their power into the play, and Gardiner finished up a nice run with a good kick. Hills placed in front of Le Leu, and a loud cheer announced that the totals were again equal.

For a little the Ports prevailed, but the score was too dangerous for the Norwoods, and by a series of long marks they called upon the Ports to defend.

When the final change took place the score was -

THREE QUARTER TIME: Norwoods 5.3; Port Adelaide 4.7

4th Quarter

Aroused to still greater exertions by the loud cries of their supporters the teams went into work at a great pace. The Norwoods had evidently reserved themselves for a big attempt.



Norwood captain Alfred "Topsy" Waldron.

Being bounced, a series of marks by Rawson, Daly and McGrath gave Shaw an opportunity, and the game looked all over as the ball went right up to the goal, but it fell short, and J. Fry secured. Taking it around the gate wing the Ports called upon the Norwoods to defend. Hamilton dispatched to Hills, who failed, and J. McKenzie had similar luck.

The Norwoods played wonderfully well together, their long marking being exceedingly good. They transferred the play to the Ports' end, where Webb defended. Sending it along the pavilion wing, Hills gave Phillips another chance,

and he made amends for previous misses by equalising the score.

With time rapidly drawing on the teams were urged on by their supporters and the Norwoods made a gallant effort, while the Ports defended in equal style. The red team, however, seemed to have a little bit in hand, and by some good marking Waldron forwarded to McGaffin, and his kick put the Norwoods a goal ahead.

Hamilton just previously was partly disabled by being seized by cramp. Resuming, the Norwoods again attacked and their combined play was too good for their opponents. In a scrimmage some distance from the goal C. Woods put his foot to the sphere and sent it between the uprights. The umpire thinking a Port man had kicked it did not give a decision, and nothing was registered.

By Mr. Trait's order the ball was kicked off from behind, and then some hot play ensued in the Port's quarters. K. McKenzie got away from two Norwoods, but Roachock outwitted him. Rawson, Roberts and Guster kept the ball forward and Daly missed a running shot. Then O. Bertram also tried a running shot, and a loud cheer greeted another goal.

With everything to gain the Ports started off again, but before anything serious had eventuated, the bell peeled out, and the great contest was over, leaving the Norwood team premiers of 1889.

FINAL SCORE: Norwood 7.4; Port Adelaide 5.9

Postscript

There is little doubt that taking the play right through the better team won. Although the Ports had the larger number of behinds, goal kicking is a most important factor in the game, and the magenta team failed in this respect, while many of their shots were from impossible distances.

With the single exception of when Carlton beat Norwood in 1887, the game was the finest contest ever seen here.

In the first quarter the play was truly magnificent; not a mark was missed or a chance between the teams, but the Norwoods lasted a trifle better, and their last charge proved irresistible. For the first time this season the Norwoods beat their opponents in the ruck. It is impossible to say who played best, as fully fifteen men on each side were really brilliant, whilst all the others did good service.

After the match was over many of the Norwoods' supporters went to the dressing room, and Waldron, the captain, was greeted with ringing cheers. Mr. Trait was similarly complimented, and he was personally thanked by the club. Bushby, the Ports' captain, on behalf of his team thanked Mr. Trait for the admirable way he had conducted his duties.

The Norwoods then gave three cheers for the Ports and their captain.

Analysis Of The Game

	Norwood	Port Adelaide
Kicks For Goal	11	16
Marks Made	86	79
Running Shots	4	1
Free Marks Received	19	22
Ball Ups 9		
Out Of Bounds 101		

Redlegs' Centenary Triumph

1978 SANFL Grand Final: Norwood vs. Sturt

The two protagonists in the 1978 SANFL grand final had both enjoyed recent success, Norwood by winning the 1975 premiership (the club's first in a quarter of a century), and Sturt through a sustained decade and a half of dominance which had yielded 7 flags.



Norwood skipper Michael Taylor holds the Thomas Seymour Hill Cup aloft at the conclusion of the 1978 SANFL grand final.

Events so far in 1978 pointed squarely to the likelihood of a Sturt victory. The Double Blues' only loss for the season had come in round 6 against West Adelaide, while they had defeated their grand final opponents on three occasions, by 34 points in round 4 at the Parade, by 45 points at Unley in round 13, and, most recently, by 22 points in the 2nd semi final at Football Park.

Norwood, which at one stage early in the year had appeared in danger of missing the finals, had finished the minor round strongly by winning 6 of its last 7 games. It then comfortably defeated a strong Glenelg combination in the qualifying final, 16.16 (112) to 8.10 (58). The 2nd semi final loss to Sturt followed before a preliminary final against arch rivals Port Adelaide which saw the 'Legs recover from a seemingly disquieting position at one stage to win, in the end, with some comfort.

Sturt were without Gary Hardeman, their experienced, resilient Victorian centre half back, and Jim Derrington, an ebullient, highly skilled rover. Norwood were adjudged to be more or less at full strength.

In front of a crowd of 50,867, and many thousands more watching 'live' on television after the SANFL had, quite unprecedentedly, permitted this having declared the match a sell-out earlier in the day, Sturt captain Paul Bagshaw won the toss and elected to kick to the southern end of Football Park. Over the course of the next two and a half hours events panned out as follows:

1st Quarter

5 mins Barton registers the opening goal of the game with a left foot snapshot from 20 metres out directly in front. **Sturt 1.1; Norwood 0.1**

9 mins Graham rounds off a three player handball chain by goaling from 40 metres out directly in front. **Sturt 2.1; Norwood 0.2**

12 mins Heinrich handballs back to Davies who snaps truly from 35 metres out straight in front. **Sturt 3.2; Norwood 0.4**

18 mins Bagshaw ends a concerted period of Double Blues pressure which had spawned 5 consecutive behinds by running into open goal after receiving a handpass from Barton. **Sturt 4.7; Norwood 0.4**

27 mins Graham picks up after a slight fumble and crashes into Norwood's Nicholson, but manages nevertheless to feed

a handball off to the running Heinrich who goals from 20 metres out straight in front. **Sturt 5.9; Norwood 0.5**

31 mins Taylor wins the ball in the centre, and kicks to Adamson at centre half forward who wheels round onto his left foot and finds Fienemann unmarked deep in the left forward pocket. Fienemann then sends a 20 metre pass in field to Gallagher who marks before kicking accurately from 40 metres out on a 45 degree angle just as the siren sounds to end the opening term.

QUARTER TIME: Sturt 5.9 (39); Norwood 1.5 (11)



Sturt champion Paul Bagshaw.

2nd Quarter

3 mins A Heinrich handball is intercepted by Woodcock 30 metres from goal directly in front. The Norwood half forward kicks across his body on the left foot and the ball sails through. **Sturt 5.9; Norwood 2.5**

6 mins Woodcock is again in the thick of the action as he receives a handball from Wynne on 15 metres ahead of centre, runs quickly forward side-stepping a tackle, and goals from 50 metres out straight in front. **Sturt 5.11; Norwood 3.5**

8 mins A short left foot pass from Nunan finds Adamson 35 metres from goal directly in front. The former Western Australian makes no mistake bringing the Redlegs to within 2 straight kicks. **Sturt 5.11; Norwood 4.5**

12 mins Burgan sends a penetrating kick into the Sturt forward lines. Floating over the heads of all the Norwood defenders the ball is marked easily by Davies on the edge of the goal square and the Sturt ruckman's aim is true. **Sturt 6.12; Norwood 4.6**

16 mins A concerted spell of Double Blue attacking pressure ends with a quick Norwood breakaway. Centre half back Kerley sends a perfect kick into the path of the running Taylor who kicks long to the true centre half forward position where the loose ball is collected by Adamson. After dodging and weaving to maneuver into position Adamson goals with a perfectly weighted left foot drop punt from a distance of 35 metres. The Redlegs move within 11 points of the Blues, the closest they would get until the final term. **Sturt 6.13; Norwood 5.8**

18 mins Quick hands by Klomp to Winter, thence to Barton and on to Graham who lofts a perfect left foot snap straight through the middle from 20 metres out. **Sturt 7.13; Norwood 5.8**

21 mins A high centering kick from the left forward pocket by is marked on the chest in the goal square by a high leaping Winter, who slyly prods a kick over the goal line before the Norwood defenders have time to recover. **Sturt 8.13; Norwood 5.8**

The remaining 10 minutes of the quarter see the action move repeatedly from one end of the ground to the other but there are no further goals.

HALF TIME: Sturt 8.15 (63); Norwood 5.10 (40)

3rd Quarter

4 mins Nunan in the right forward pocket picks out Taylor at centre half forward and finds him with a high floating pass. Taylor is collected heavily by Howard just after marking but he gets to his feet and his kick from a distance of 35 metres just squeezes through for full points. **Sturt 8.15; Norwood 6.10**



John Wynne attempts to invade the Sturt coaching box.

12 mins Bagshaw at left half forward evades Stasinowsky before unleashing a perfectly weighted drop kick to the front of the goal square where Davies, who 'has the sit', marks cleanly over Kerley. The Sturt ruckman has no trouble in converting from 15 metres out, straight in front. **Sturt 9.17; Norwood 6.10**

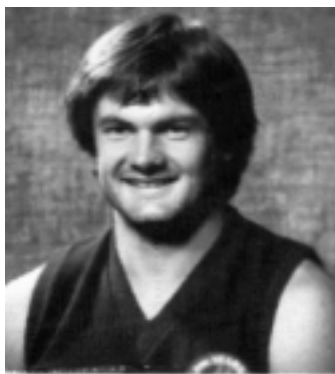
13 mins Norwood's response is swift and telling: Adler in the left forward pocket inaugurates a handball chain involving Fienemann and Turbill and culminating in Adamson goaling

easily from 20 metres out on a slight angle. **Sturt 9.17; Norwood 7.10**

17 mins Wynne overruns the ball near the grandstand wing boundary and ends up in the Sturt coaching dug-out. Brief chaos ensues involving numerous players and officials from both sides. However, a full scale flare up is prevented by the swift intervention of the umpires.

20 mins Klomp sends a long kick towards the goal square where Norwood centre half back Kerley is seemingly ideally placed to mark. However, the former Melbourne player inexplicably fumbles allowing Winter to run in, scoop up the loose ball, and run into an open goal to notch Sturt's 10th. **Sturt 10.19; Norwood 7.10**

24 mins Adler goals from 45 metres out midway between centre half forward and half forward right after a strong, purposeful lead enables him to mark Woodcock's pass 3 metres ahead of Casey. **Sturt 10.20; Norwood 8.10**



Neil Craig (Norwood)

27 mins A quick sequence of handballs under pressure by Sturt players in the centre square ends with Heinrich sending a prodigious drop punt straight through the middle from over 50 metres out directly in front. **Sturt 11.21; Norwood 8.10**

28 mins Once again the Redlegs' response is swift as a Sturt turnover at centre half back is punished by a straight forward goal from 30 metres out by Adamson. **Sturt 11.21; Norwood 9.10**

30 mins A boundary throw in in Sturt's right forward pocket sees Davies use his body cleverly to outmaneuver Button, catch the ball cleanly, and swiftly feed off by hand to the running Barton who converts from 20 metres out on a slight angle. **Sturt 12.21; Norwood 9.10**

THREE QUARTER TIME: Sturt 12.21 (93); Norwood 9.10 (64)

4th Quarter

1 min Adler taps the ball through Sanders' legs to the unmarked Gallagher who has no trouble in goaling from 20 metres out straight in front. **Sturt 12.21; Norwood 10.10**

2 mins Turbill's in-field pass from the left half forward flank is taken by Craig on the half volley. Craig quickly steadies and kicks accurately from 45 metres out on a slight angle. **Sturt 12.21; Norwood 11.11**

3 mins Heinrich tackles Nicholson in the right forward pocket, picks up the loose ball and, after initially running away from goal, turns sharply back towards it, evading the attentions of several Norwood backmen in the process, before coolly, if tiredly, slotting home a goal from less than 20 metres. **Sturt 13.21; Norwood 11.11**

4 mins Adamson is awarded a dubious holding the man decision after appearing to drop the ball when tackled. His towering screw punt from close to 60 metres out almost directly in front scores maximum points after just evading the goal line pack. **Sturt 13.21; Norwood 12.11**

5 mins Rosser's erratic kick from centre half forward appears to miss everything. However, the goal umpire, having only belatedly decided to run across to attempt to follow the course of the ball, awards a behind. **Sturt 13.21; Norwood 12.12**

12 mins Adler displays great desperation when, after appearing to lose control of the ball, he manages to tap it on to the unmarked Turbill who makes no mistake from point blank range. **Sturt 13.23; Norwood 13.13**



Sturt coach Jack Oatey, originally a Redleg.

15 mins From a boundary throw in deep in the right forward pocket Wynne catches and then drops the ball which is tapped on by Phillis straight into the path of Turbill. The Norwood rover, whose mouth is bleeding profusely following an earlier clash with Bagshaw, converts easily from the front edge of the square, bringing the Redlegs to within a kick. **Sturt 13.23; Norwood 14.14**

17 mins Taylor bounces twice en route from the centre of the ground to the front of the centre square before kicking high to a pack of players 25 metres out from goal. Wynne cleverly manages to bring the ball to ground before circumnavigating the pack and, with a casual round the corner snap shot, putting the Redlegs into the lead for the first time since early in the opening term. **Norwood 15.14; Sturt 13.23**

20 mins Mutton comes on for Barton - Sturt coach Jack Oatey's first use of the interchange bench all afternoon.

24 mins The initiative shifts back to Sturt as Burgan runs into an open goal and makes no mistake after receiving a handball from Winter. **Sturt 14.24; Norwood 15.15**

29 mins Casey is tackled on the last line of Sturt's defence but just manages to scramble a kick away. The kick travels about 10 metres to where two Norwood players, Gallagher and Wynne, appear to spoil one another. Umpire Des Foster blows his whistle for what the TV commentators assume is a free to Gallagher, but which Foster later confirms as a mark. Gallagher gratefully restores the Redlegs' advantage. **Norwood 16.15; Sturt 14.25**

Despite attacking incessantly for most of the remaining three and a half minutes the Double Blues only manage to add one further point to their tally. The siren sounds with the ball deep in Sturt's forward lines and the Redlegs, in their centenary year, have achieved a sensational triumph, one which Sturt coach Jack Oatey - a former Norwood man - later magnanimously tells them "was to your everlasting credit".

FULL TIME: Norwood 16.15 (111); Sturt 14.26 (110)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Norwood	1.5	5.10	9.10	16.15	111
Sturt	5.9	8.15	12.21	14.26	110

BEST - Norwood: Adamson, Taylor, Craig, Button, Rosser, Nunan **Sturt:** Burgan, Winter, Davies, Heinrich, Barton

GOALS - Norwood: Adamson 5; Gallagher 3; Turbill, Woodcock 2; Adler, Craig, Taylor, Wynne **Sturt:** Heinrich 3; Barton, Burgan, Davies, Graham, Winter 2; Bagshaw

ATTENDANCE: 50,867 at Football Park

PORT ADELAIDE

Club Address: P.O. Box 2095, Port Adelaide, South Australia 5015

Website: <http://www.portadelaidefc.com.au/sanfl>

Home Ground: Alberton Oval, 9 Queen Street, Alberton

Formed: 1870

Colours: Black and white

Emblem: Magpies

Senior Grade Premierships: 1884, 1890, 1897, 1903, 1906, 1910, 1913-14, 1921, 1928, 1936-37, 1939, 1951, 1954-55-56-57-58-59, 1962-63, 1965, 1977, 1979-80-81, 1988-89-90, 1992, 1994-95-96, 1998 & 1999 (36 total)

Other Premierships: Championship of Australia 1890, 1910, 1913-14 (4 total - record); Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy 1962-63-64, 1970, 1977, 1979-80, 1988-89, 1992, 1994, 1999 (12 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1961, 1973, 1989 (3 total)

Magarey Medallists: Stan Malin 1899; Jack Mack 1907; Sampson 'Shine' Hosking 1910 & 1915*; W. John Ashley 1914; Charles Adams 1921*; Peter Bampton 1925*; Robert Quinn 1938 & 1945; David Boyd 1956; Geof Motley 1964; Trevor Obst 1967; Russell Ebert 1971, 1974, 1976 & 1980; Peter Woite 1975; Greg Anderson 1986; Scott Hodges 1990; Nathan Buckley 1992; Tony Brown 2001; Ryan O'Connor 2001; Brett Ebert 2003; Jeremy Clayton 2005 (19 Medallists/24 Medals)

All Australians: John Abley 1956, 1958 & 1961; John Cahill 1969; Greg Phillips 1980; Mark Williams 1980; Tony Giles 1983; Craig Bradley 1983 & 1985; Stephen Curtis 1983; Greg Anderson 1987; Martin Leslie 1988 (12 total)

SANFL Top Goalkickers: J.Litchfield (13) 1883; R.Roy (22) 1884; C.Fry (32) 1889; J.McKenzie (32) 1890; J.Tomkins (27) 1897; J.Mathieson (30) 1905, (42) 1906 & (33) 1908; J.Quinn (32) 1907; F.Hansen (46) 1910, (41) 1911, (37) 1912 & (39) 1913; J.Dunn (33) 1914; L.Lackman (25) 1919; L.Dayman

(86) 1929; A.McLean (80) 1947; R.Johns (70) 1956, (55) 1958, (76) 1962 & (54) 1963; W.Dittmar (74) 1959 & (69) 1960; E.Freeman (81) 1966; T.Evans (87) 1977, (90) 1978, (146) 1980, (98) 1981, (125) 1982 & (127) 1984; S.Hodges (153) 1990, (129) 1994 & (117) 1996; M.Tylor (97) 1992 & (90) 1993 (35 total)

Highest Score: 37.21 (243) vs. Woodville 13.4 (82) at Football Park in round 3 1980

Most Games: 392 by Russell Ebert from 1968 to 1978 & 1980 to 1985

Record Home Attendance: 22,738 in round 11 1977: Port Adelaide 9.17 (71); Norwood 10.9 (69)

Record Finals Attendance: 66,897 for 1976 grand final at Football Park: Sturt 17.14 (116); Port Adelaide 10.15 (75)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by SANFL in 1998*

The initial meeting of the Port Adelaide Football Club took place on Friday 13th May 1870. Those of a superstitious bent might well have wondered what they were starting, but it is extremely doubtful if anyone present at the meeting would have had even the vaguest inkling that the acorn they were planting would grow one day into a multi-million dollar oak tree which tapped into the emotions, aspirations and energies of several hundred thousand adherents.

The meeting, and hence the Port Adelaide Football Club itself, had its genesis in an informal discussion between Rann, Leicester and Ireland on the North Parade early in 1870; the three men shared a concern about the lack of social facilities in their district, and saw the establishment a cricket and football club as an ideal way to begin to rectify the situation. As winter was approaching when the club was formed, it was football which got underway first, with Port Adelaide engaging in its inaugural match against a team calling itself 'the Young Australians' on Tuesday 24 May 1870. The venue for the match was a stretch of ground known as 'Buck's Flat', which formed part of the Glanville Hall Estate,

owned by the club's founding president, Captain John Hart. Port Adelaide's initial colours were blue and white, and the team's captain in this first ever fixture, which was played in gale force winds, and was ultimately drawn, was J.Wald. Others to represent Port Adelaide during the early years included future club captain Will Fletcher, Tom Prideaux, Tom Tulloch, Will Tait, George Gliddon, Sam Tyzack, 'Boss' Middleton, and Harry and Tom Smith.

Football in Adelaide at this time was played according to a variety of different sets of rules, with the Old Adelaide and Kensington sets being the most popular. There were variations between the different rule sets in terms of things like whether or not a player running with the ball had to bounce it, whether, and under what circumstances, a mark could be claimed, and even what a team needed to do in order to score a goal. For the Port Adelaide players, this entailed a continual process of adaptation - as well as, by all accounts, considerable confusion. After a game between Port Adelaide and Kensington at Buck's Flat on 5 July 1873 it was reported that "neither side understood the rules clearly",⁹⁷ and there was even some uncertainty as to which team had won. This uncertainty derived from the fact that the only 'goal' of the game, kicked by Kensington, had struck the cross bar⁹⁸ before traversing the goal line, an occurrence which, under many of the rule sets in vogue at the time, would have meant the goal being disallowed, as all parts of the physical structure of the goals were deemed to be 'dead'. Under the rules in force on this particular day, however, the two goal posts and cross bar were held to be part of the field of play, and so a ball striking either and proceeding over the goal line resulted in a goal. Kensington was thus adjudged to be the winner of the game.

As the 1870s wore on, football rapidly became better organised and more popular, and by 1877 Port Adelaide was

⁹⁷ From a contemporary account reproduced in *South Australian Football: The Past and the Present, 1860-1965* by C.K. Knuckey, page 21.

⁹⁸ Goals, at the time, typically had a cross bar, which the ball had to travel under in order to register a goal.

one of several clubs anxious to see a measure of uniformity and structure introduced. The most critical requirement of all, it was felt, was a single, universally acknowledged set of rules, and with this in mind, a meeting was arranged, open to all football clubs in the colony, for Monday 30 April 1877. A total of twelve clubs, including Port Adelaide, sent two delegates each to the meeting, at which it was resolved to establish an Association to oversee football in the colony, the first organisation of its type in Australia.⁹⁹

The main concern of the delegates at this initial meeting was to agree on a uniform set of rules of play. Agreement on the shape of the ball (oval) was readily reached, as was acceptance that the goal posts should be deemed to be "of unlimited height", with no cross bar. Much more contentious, however, was the issue of whether the rules to be adopted should be orientated more towards rugby, which was favoured in Sydney, or the indigenous game developed in Melbourne. In the end, after much discussion, it was decided that, in order to facilitate the playing of intercolonial matches, the rules of the SAFA should closely mirror those which prevailed in Melbourne. In the event, the finally published rules were almost identical to the 'Victorian Rules of Football' agreed in 1874 between delegates of the Albert Park, Carlton, Geelong, Melbourne, North Melbourne and St Kilda clubs, with the major difference being a stipulation by the SAFA, missing from the Victorian rules, that teams should consist of twenty players, unless otherwise agreed beforehand.

Of the eight clubs which contested the inaugural SAFA premiership in 1877, only Port Adelaide and South Adelaide have maintained an unbroken involvement ever since. Port Adelaide won 9 and drew 2 of its 15 fixtures in 1877 to finish in 4th place on the ladder. It scored 23 goals, the same number as premier South Adelaide, but conceded 13 compared to South's 1.

⁹⁹ Three weeks later, in Melbourne, Victoria followed suit with the formation of the Victorian Football Association.

Port was certainly not an overnight success in the SAFA. By the time it broke through for its first flag in 1884, the club which was to develop into its arch rival, Norwood (admitted to the Association in 1878), already had half a dozen premierships to its name. By the time of the 1884 premiership the Port Adelaide players were taking to the field wearing magenta jerseys, navy knickerbockers, and magenta and blue cap and hose. This was actually the club's second change in uniform: from 1878 to 1882 the team had worn an eye-catching rose pink outfit with white knickerbockers. The famous black and white playing uniform did not arrive until 1902.



Port Adelaide's 1884 premiership combination, the club's first.

Another key development during Port Adelaide's early years came in 1881 with the leasing from the Queenstown and Alberton District Council of the Alberton Oval, which except for the 1975-6 seasons has been the club's home base ever since. Initially, the oval was leased for an annual rental of 10 shillings, with the sole condition being that it had to be maintained and used as a cricket and football ground.

After its 1884 premiership win, Port Adelaide slumped to 3rd place the following year, and an unprecedented 4th, and last, in a somewhat atrophied 1886 competition. In each of the next three seasons, Port finished in 2nd position on the

ladder behind Norwood, losing the 1889 premiership in a play-off, before finally tasting success for the second time in 1890. The 1890 season also saw the Magentas, as they were known,¹⁰⁰ earning the title of 'champions of Australia' after overcoming the challenge of VFA premier South Melbourne on the Adelaide Oval. Port came from behind to win 7.10 to 6.13 (with behinds being recorded, but not counting), thanks in large part to the performance of John McKenzie, whose 5th goal for the match during the dying moments also proved to be the winner.¹⁰¹

After starting so promisingly, the 1890s developed into something of a horror decade for the Port Adelaide Football Club. It was a time of grim economic depression, with working class areas such as the port being hit harder than anywhere else. Many Port Adelaide players were forced to leave South Australia in search of work, while in 1894 a group of dissidents jumped ship to form a new club, Port Natives, the antecedent of the West Torrens Football Club. Most of these dissidents were players who had been unable to get a game with Port, and so their departure was not looked upon at the time as a disaster. Two years later, however, Port Natives finished higher on the SAFA ladder than a Port Adelaide team that had difficulty in fulfilling its fixtures each week, so dire had the player shortage become, and so impoverished was the club spirit as a consequence.

At the end of the 1896 season the club committee undertook strenuous efforts to rectify the situation, and several new recruits were enticed to join. However, without doubt the biggest single reason for the club's meteoric improvement in 1897 was the conscious and deliberate cultivation by both the committee and the team's on field leaders of a revitalised club spirit, whereby playing for Port Adelaide became a genuine source of pride, something to be

¹⁰⁰ During the nineteenth century, Port Adelaide was referred to, variously, as 'the Magentas', 'the Saltwaters', 'the Portonians', and even the somewhat derogatory 'Mudholians'.

¹⁰¹ See *Champions of Australia* by Max Sayer, page 8, for a more detailed account of this match.

cherished, valued and never taken for granted. Players like club skipper Ken McKenzie, Arch Hosie, 'Nicky' Corston, Jimmy Tomkins and James 'Welshy' Davies, who had lived through some or all of the barren period of the mid-1890s, must have felt that they had crossed to a new club entirely as the Magentas became the first SAFA team since Adelaide in 1886 to win the premiership the year after finishing bottom. It was conclusive proof, if such were needed, that football at the top level is as much a game of the mind as the body; moreover, in retrospect it might be regarded as an important benchmark in the development of what might be termed 'the Port Adelaide spirit'. On numerous occasions to come, Port Adelaide would triumph, against the odds, against ostensibly more talented opposition, largely on the basis of its fanatical determination, self-belief and ability to perform at maximum intensity for an entire game.

Another key factor in Port Adelaide's emergence as the most successful major football team of the twentieth century was the inception by the SAFA of electorate football. Initially introduced on a voluntary basis in 1897, the electorate system stipulated that players were required to play for the club from the electoral district in which they resided; this rule became compulsory two years later, and suddenly Port Adelaide had automatic access to many of the finest footballers in the colony. For a youngster growing up in the predominantly working class suburbs in and around the port football was at once a release and, potentially at any rate, a ticket to a better life, if not economically - Australian football in South Australia would not begin to reward its players with anything more than a pittance for many years yet¹⁰² - at least in terms of notoriety within the community. Moreover, the football club itself became part of the essential fabric of that

¹⁰² As late as 1934, the Glenelg players' reward for winning the grand final against Port Adelaide was five rabbits a man, and this kind of thing was by no means atypical. If a player wanted to earn a living playing football, he first established a 'name' for himself playing in a competition like the SANFL, VFL or WANFL, and then 'went bush', where employment as playing coach of one of the wealthier country clubs might elicit payments up to ten times as lucrative as back in the city.

community, helping define and sustain it. As Bernard Whimpress pointed out in the early 1980s, "the Alberton Oval and the sprawling shopping centres around the Black Diamond Corner have always meant something sure, something close to the heart".¹⁰³ Although one might take exception to the word 'always', the point is clear; moreover, it would arguably be perfectly valid to add 'the Port Adelaide Football Club' itself, as distinct from its home venue, to the list, although it is doubtful if supporters from other clubs would be much inclined to share the sentiments.

The years around the turn of the century saw Port Adelaide display uncharacteristically inconsistent form as one generation of players was slowly superseded by another, and the impact of the electorate system was only gradually felt. In 1898, the club participated, along with Norwood and South Adelaide, in the first full-scale SAFA finals series, ultimately being placed 2nd after losing the final by 4 goals against South. Over the next couple of seasons Port underwent a spectacular nosedive which was in the nature of a final, irksome irritation prior to its systematic, inexorable emergence in the years leading up to world war one as one of the greatest teams in Australian football history.

On 1st January 1901, Australia officially became a nation, and in response to that development the country underwent a brief kind of blossoming, as if awakening to the extraordinary scope of the possibilities that now confronted it. This blossoming impinged on virtually every aspect of life - art, business, politics, education - as people throughout Australia explored the implications of belonging to one nation, and began, by implication rather than design, to manufacture a shared identity and, in certain respects, a shared set of perceptions and attitudes.

Arguably the most significant impact of all, however, was in relation to the field of activity in which the infant nation would soon exhibit a degree of excellence beyond all others: sport. As far as Australian football was concerned, this meant

¹⁰³ *The South Australian Football Story* by Bernard Whimpress, page 144.

the emergence of probably a greater general awareness and appreciation of the game in its national context than at any other time in history, for not only was the transfer of players between states at an all-time high, so too was the practice of teams embarking on interstate tours; moreover, the main ostensible purpose of the inauguration by the ANFC of regular interstate championships series, or 'carnivals', beginning in Melbourne in 1908, was to establish football as a quintessentially Australian (indeed, given the participation of New Zealand in the inaugural carnival, Australasian) preoccupation. In that aspiration, it failed, for reasons which lie outside the immediate scope of this entry, but which are covered elsewhere in the site; however, as anyone who has pursued a dream will tell you, there is a sense in which the journey itself can be more gratifying and interesting than actually arriving at one's destiny. Such was certainly the case for the Port Adelaide Football Club, whose journey in the opening decade and a half of the twentieth century mirrored, in microcosm, that of the nation as a whole: exhilarating, intermittently rewarding, but ultimately forced along an undesirable, if perversely ennobling, cul-de-sac.



The Port players take a break during their victory over Sturt in the 1910 premierships decider at the Adelaide Oval.

The nineteenth century had seen Port Adelaide achieve sporadic success (three premierships) interspersed with sustained periods of mediocrity, and even downright ineptitude. The first few years of the twentieth century would see the club acquire a new consistency, and with it the seeds of a reputation for pushing the boundaries, for always seeking to transcend what common sense said was possible.

That 'boundary pushing' could also occasionally land the club in trouble. In 1902, for instance, the Port players and committee objected to the appointment of umpire Kneebone for the club's semi final match against South Adelaide. Consequently, a letter was sent to the Association informing it of the club's intention to forfeit the match, whereupon the Association ruled that the club did not have such a right, and disqualified Port for the remainder of the season. It would seem that Port Adelaide was a club where principle outweighed even ambition, although the fact that the club remained highly ambitious was clearly evidenced in 1903 with the opening of Alberton Oval's first grand stand. That same season witnessed the tangible realisation of some of that ambition as the team now known as 'the Magpies' overcame the setback of an 8 point final loss to South Adelaide to turn the tables on the same opposition a week later in the challenge final. (Both matches were played under the jurisdiction of umpire Carris.) It was the start of a five season sequence during which the club never failed to contest the premiership deciding match, but only once, in 1906, was it successful in actually lifting the flag. Once again, as in 1903, it was indebted to the challenge system, for after securing the minor premiership it put on an abject display in the 1st semi final, amassing 12 scoring shots without a goal in going under to North Adelaide by 22 points. A fortnight later, in front of 20,000 spectators, it played off for the flag against the same opponents, and on this occasion it managed to replicate its minor round form with a comfortable 9.12 (66) to 5.9 (39) victory.

Clearly, Port Adelaide had a good side, but the lack of genuine champion players left it some way short of greatness.

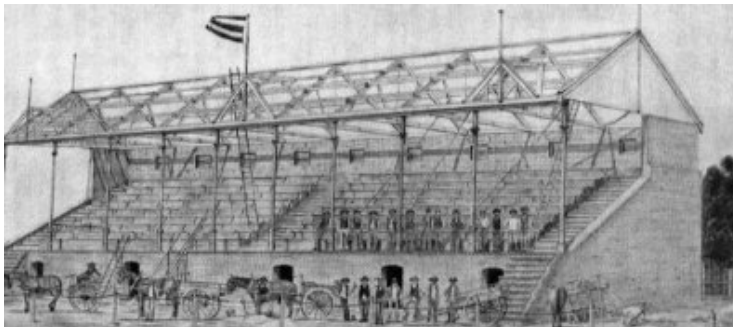
Between 1907 and 1912, however, this deficiency was rectified in the most emphatic and noteworthy way imaginable as players of the calibre of Sampson 'Shine' Hosking, 'Angie' Congear, Jack Woollard, Frank Hansen, Harold Oliver, Jack Londrigan and Jack 'Spud' Ashley fronted up for the black and whites. If Port had a problem, however, it was one that would be all too familiar to the club's supporters of a century hence, namely an unfortunate and inexplicable tendency to shoot itself in the foot come finals time. In 1907, for example, the Magpies won the minor premiership with a 10-2 record but then conspired to lose twice, and heavily, to Norwood in the major round. Two years later events followed a similar pattern as the most formidable team of the minor round suddenly found it within itself to perform like wooden spooners against Norwood and West Adelaide in the finals.

In 1910, however, it was a different story. Inspired by the famous 'three-Cs' first ruck combination of Callinan, Curnow and Congear, and with Magarey Medallist 'Shine' Hosking in consistently effervescent form, the Jack Woollard-led combination gained not only the SAFL premiership, but the championship of Australia, and the genuine admiration of football fans throughout the country. A mid-season tour of Western Australia produced a series of performances of such captivating brilliance that renowned East Fremantle identity Dolph Heinrichs had "no hesitation in naming this Port Adelaide team as the best club 18 that has visited WA, and I am not forgetting Collingwood's two visits, nor those of Essendon, Fitzroy and St Kilda".¹⁰⁴

Back home the Magpies experienced an untroubled year, losing only twice in 13 minor round games before enjoying a 3 match clean sweep in the finals that culminated in a 19 point defeat of Sturt in the premiership decider. In doing so they managed the rare feat of securing South Australian football's celebrated 'trifecta' of premiership,

¹⁰⁴ These comments were made some thirty-five years after the event, and were reproduced by Jack Lee in his history of the East Fremantle Football Club, *Celebrating 100 Years Of Tradition*, page 65.

Magarey Medal and top goal kicking award (won by Frank Hansen, with 46 goals).



The original Alberton Oval grandstand.

If Port's supporters imagined their club had turned the corner, however, they were in for a rude awakening: in both 1911 (1 loss) and 1912 (unbeaten, and a percentage of 67.23) the side secured the minor premiership, only to crumble when the heat was applied in the finals. After the Magpies lost the 1912 challenge final to West Adelaide, club secretary James Hodge allegedly proffered the rueful - and very 'un-Port Adelaide' - observation that "this is the sixteenth time we have been second and we are getting used to it".¹⁰⁵ Earlier in the year, the club had embarked on its seventh interstate tour in eight years,¹⁰⁶ this time to Tasmania where, on 3 July, it defeated a TFL representative side by 13 points, 7.13 (55) to 6.6 (42). The quality of the TFL side can perhaps be gauged from its achievement a few days later in scoring a comfortable 16 point win over a Melbourne team that, later in

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in *The South Australian Football Story* by Bernard Whimpress, page 145.

¹⁰⁶ These tours had taken in Broken Hill (1905), Sydney (1907), Melbourne for the interstate carnival (1908), Melbourne, Ballarat and Bendigo (1909), the WA goldfields region and Perth (1910), Melbourne for the Melbourne Cup, and Sydney and the Blue Mountains (1911).

the season, would only narrowly fail to qualify for the VFL finals. Results such as these only serve to exemplify and emphasise the comparative evenness of standard of league football in the four major states (plus arguably that of the VFA and Broken Hill) during this era.



Angelo Congear

At last, in 1913 the Magpies got things the right way around, recovering from their 'worst' minor round performance since 1909 (albeit that it was still good enough to secure the minor premiership) to hit their straps conclusively during the finals. The exhilarating style of football of which the team was capable was largely responsible in attracting a sizeable crowd of 22,000 to the Adelaide Oval where North Adelaide, after putting up a creditable tussle, were duly dispatched to the tune of 14 points. For the fourth season in a row, Frank Hansen topped the SAFL's goal kicking list, but the elusive trifecta was missed after North Adelaide ruckman Tom Leahy was favoured by the umpires ahead of Port champion Harold Oliver in voting for the Magarey Medal.

The Magpies added the 1913 club championship of Australia title to their CV with an emphatic 63 point demolition of Fitzroy on the Adelaide Oval. Wily and slippery rover Ang Congear booted 5 of Port's 13 goals in a best afield display.

Port Adelaide's 1914 season was one of the most remarkable in Australian football, indeed Australian sporting history, with the Magpies comfortably winning all 14 of their league fixtures before downing Carlton in the championship of Australia match, 9.16 (70) to 5.6 (36), and then a combined league side in a special charity match.

The loss of key players to war service or, in the case of Harold Oliver, to the family orchards in South Australia's Riverland region, ultimately undermined Port Adelaide's bid for three successive flags in 1915. However, initially at least it was business as usual with an effortless 10.10 (70) to 4.8 (32) destruction of a strong South Adelaide side on the Adelaide Oval, and thereafter the side did not taste defeat until the round 11 game against West Adelaide on 31 July at the Jubilee Oval. Indeed, the team's previous loss had actually occurred 30 games and more than 25 months earlier, on 21 June 1913! Unfortunately, the habit of losing proved infectious: the Magpies ended the minor round with an unexpected 2 point loss to a weak West Torrens side, before capitulating to both West Adelaide and ultimate premier Sturt in the finals. It was a dismal way to bring their halcyon era to an end, and it would be another four years before they would be granted the opportunity to rectify matters as, from 1916-18, the SAFL suspended operations because of the demands of the war.

When full-scale football resumed in 1919 Port Adelaide found itself in a fairly strong position, with pre-war stalwarts like Jack Ashley, Harold Oliver, Angie Congear, 'Bandy' McFarlane, 'Shine' Hosking, Jack Robertson, and Horrie Pope - all of whom had been members of the 1913-14 premierships teams - still available. Moreover, the district had continued to produce a large number of promising youngsters, notably Charlie Adams, Peter Bampton, Bert Olds, Eric Dewar and Charlie Maywald. All five of these youngsters would be in

the next Port team to break through for a flag, in 1921, as would the equally talented Dayman brothers, Clem (ex-North Adelaide) and Leslie (always known as 'Bro'), both of whom made their Magpies debuts that same year. Of the pre-war brigade, however, only Oliver, who skippered the side, Congear and Hosking would remain.



The great Harold Oliver, in flight against Sturt at the Adelaide Oval.

Reflecting this 'change of the guard', football itself would alter considerably during the 1920s. Most significantly

of all perhaps, by the end of the decade the Victorian Football League would have arrived at a position of unrivalled strength. Whereas prior to the war many of the game's best players had happily and frequently transferred between the three major state competitions (and, indeed, others) and, in so doing, had helped maintain a measure of uniformity of standard between them, the longer the 1920s wore on, the more the player traffic tended to flow in just one direction, towards Melbourne. That this trend had an inimical effect on the standard of football played in South Australia is indisputable, while as far as the Port Adelaide Football Club was concerned there was an inevitable erosion of self-image; after being beyond any reasonable doubt the strongest club in the land in 1914, by the early 1930s it was, in the eyes of some at any rate, merely a breeding ground for VFL players such as Quinn, Dayman, Hender and Waye. Not until the arrival on the scene of one Foster Neil Williams in the 1950s would the inferiority complex which this perceived state of affairs engendered begin to dissipate.

Back in the 1920s, however, Port's 1921 premiership combination lost little in comparison with its pre-war counterparts, although after totally dominating the minor round it did somehow contrive to lose a semi final to Norwood, thereby necessitating a challenge final against the same opposition.

In front of a then SAFL record crowd of 34,800 Port Adelaide duly made amends to secure a 9th title, but only after a dour, tense and strenuous encounter in which the result remained in doubt until late in the final term. Port Adelaide eventually squeezed home by 8 points, 4.8 (32) to 3.6 (24).

The remainder of the 1920s brought something of a roller-coaster ride for Magpies supporters as the team dropped out of the 'four' in 1922 before plunging to an undignified 7th spot on the ladder, ahead only of new boys Glenelg, the following year. For the 1924 Hobart carnival the club was only able to supply a single player - Leslie Dayman - to the South Australian team, its lowest ever contribution.

From the mid-1920s onwards there was gradual improvement as a number of talented players who had made their debuts in the early part of the decade began to find their feet. Chief among these were Arthur Hoffman, 'Punch' Mucklow, Laurie Hodge, Len Galliford, and future premierships captain Vic Johnson. When these players were joined by accomplished youngsters such as Tom Quinn, Bob and Ken Johnson, and Alan Hender the Magpies were poised for another concerted tilt at the flag. In 1928 the side topped the ladder after the minor round with a 14-3 record, and survived the by now almost traditional 'scare' of a semi final loss to Norwood, before clinching the premierships in style with a 15.14 (104) to 7.14 (56) 'revenge' demolition of the same opponents.

Port's tally of 104 points was the highest ever in a premierships-deciding match, but the record lasted only a year as in the 1929 challenge final Norwood booted 16.14 (110) to overcome the Magpies, who totalled 10.9 (69), by 41 points.

The 1930 season saw the side battle its way through to the grand final from 4th place on the strength of wins over Norwood by 3 points in the 1st semi final, and Sturt by 34 points in the final. However, in a closely fought challenge final minor premier North Adelaide just proved to have the Magpies' measure, edging home by 4 points, 9.13 (67) to 9.9 (63). The onset of the worst economic depression of the twentieth century had an inimical effect on attendances, with a crowd of just 23,609, easily the lowest since the war-affected 1915 season, turning up for the season's decisive match. In 1929, in fact, all four finals matches had attracted larger crowds than the 1930 challenge final.

The depression had other adverse effects as well. In 1931 and '32, Port Adelaide lost no fewer than four key players -Tom Quinn, Vic Johnson, 'Bro' Dayman and Tommy Wayne - to interstate clubs capable of providing them with secure employment. Needless to say, the club's on field performances suffered as a consequence, although it still managed to reach the finals for 3rd and 4th place finishes.

Not so in 1933, however, as the Magpies plummeted to 5th place, their lowest finishing position since 1924.



“The Mighty Quinn”.

The 1934 season brought a remarkable turn-around though as a new generation of prospective champions began to impose themselves, including one of the game's earliest genuine ruck-rovers, Allan 'Bull' Reval, lanky ruckman Tom Kelleway, brilliant on-baller and centreline player Jack Dermody, and the first in a long line of ruggedly indefatigable full backs to serve the club, Ken Obst.¹⁰⁷ In addition, Vic

¹⁰⁷ Ken Obst's sons, Peter and Trevor, later also represented the Magpies with distinction, amassing an overall total of 591 SANFL games, which in Peter's case included 51 with Woodville.

Johnson had returned 'home' from a brief Tasmanian sojourn and captained the club for a record 5th season.

It proved to be an extraordinarily closely contested year as Port Adelaide, with just one win more than in 1933, won the minor premiership on percentage from Glenelg. Back in 6th position, West Adelaide managed just two wins fewer than the leading pair, and even wooden spooners South Adelaide boasted a fairly formidable line-up as they proved with a 20.15 (135) to 13.15 (93) trouncing of Port in round 2. Overall, however, most observers regarded the Magpies as the team to beat, an assessment that appeared vindicated when they scored a runaway 65 point 2nd semi final victory over a hapless Glenelg side. Football has a strange habit of smacking you in the teeth when you least expect it, though: two weeks later in the grand final, the Glenelg players somehow found it within themselves to manufacture probably their finest all round performance since the club joined the league, and Port ended up on the end of a shock 9 point reversal. It was yet another reminder, as if one were needed, that grand finals are a game apart, and the quality of a team's minor round and early final performances ultimately have very little bearing on the destiny of the premiership.

Sadly, it was a lesson that had to be rammed home yet again in 1935: the Magpies once more did all the hard work, winning the minor premiership with a 12-5 record, and scoring a comfortable 17.17 (119) to 10.13 (73) 2nd semi final victory over South Adelaide, but in the grand final re-match a fortnight later it was the comparatively unfancied southerners who showed the greater desperation, cohesion and will-to-win to edge home by 8 points.

The 1936 season was one of special significance as it marked the centenary of South Australia's establishment as a British colony. By happy coincidence, there was also a marginal easing of the state's economic difficulties, with a concomitant increase in league attendances. Throughout the off season there had been enormous anticipation down Alberton way with the news that favourite son Sampson 'Shine' Hosking was returning to the club as coach after a

successful stint in the same role with West Torrens. Meanwhile Jack Dermody would be replacing Bob Johnson as club skipper.



Lew Roberts, 179 games for Port and Port-Torrens, mainly as a centreman, between 1937 and 1948.

Prior to the opening round of the season, 'Corinthian', writing in the 'SA Football Budget', suggested that:

as far as it is possible to judge before the combatants have had the acid test applied, there will be none of the eight teams sufficiently powerful to dominate the situation. This ensures a keen fight for the premiership, and for possession of a magnificent cup presented by Mr. J.H. Gosse, a great supporter of our National

*game, who was one of its most able exponents when he played with Norwood just more than 30 years ago.*¹⁰⁸

In predicting 'a keen fight for the premiership', the Budget was right on the mark. With two rounds to play, only Port Adelaide was securely ensconced in the top four, with four teams battling almost neck and neck for the other three places. Moreover, had the Magpies, who had just endured an inconsistent month, gone under in their last two matches they could conceivably have dropped as low as fourth.

In the event, Port scored solid wins over Glenelg and Norwood in the final two rounds, with the latter result in particular no doubt eliciting more than a modicum of pleasure at Alberton, given that it effectively consigned the Redlegs to 5th place on the ladder, and a spectator's role for the finals.

The Magpies of 1936 were a strong team all 'round, but with a particularly potent forward line in which full forward Jim Prideaux (86 goals for the year) and centre half forward Albie Hollingsworth (78 goals) excelled. Hollingsworth also won Port's best and fairest trophy in 1936, his second such award in three years. Another key factor in the team's pre-eminence was the uncanny 'team within a team' understanding of the Wightman (or Kelleway)-Reval-Quinn combination. The Quinn in question was Bob, younger brother of Tommy, who had made his league debut for the Magpies as an eighteen year old in 1933, and would go on to become one of Port Adelaide's, and the game's, greatest ever rovers.

In the 2nd semi final, Port's normally prolific forward line let the team down badly, managing just 13 goals from 39 scoring shots against a Sturt team that had rather less of the play, but kicked straighter, and won by 33 points. In the following week's preliminary final the Magpies returned to something approaching their best form as they overcame the challenge of North Adelaide by 6 goals 1, but there was

¹⁰⁸ 'The SA Football Budget', 2/5/36, page 5.

division of opinion over whether their performance would have been good enough to trouble the Double Blues.

As befitted the seminal nature of the occasion, the 1936 grand final proved to be one of the greatest ever. For most of the first half, Sturt looked head and shoulders the better team, winning in virtually every position, and leading at the main break by 28 points, 11.6 (72) to 6.8 (44). However, just as in the 2nd semi final, the Magpies lifted their game in the third quarter, with only bad kicking for goal - some of it, admittedly, attributable to the intense pressure brought to bear by the Blues' backmen - preventing them from edging in front by the final change. As it was, 4.8 to 1.2 was enough to bring Port to within 4 points, and the scene was set for a torrid, nail-biting final term, with the Magpies snatching the lead for the first time shortly after the resumption, only for Sturt to fight back and reclaim it shortly afterwards. Fortunes ebbed and flowed throughout the quarter, and with less than a minute remaining, and the scoreboard showing Port in front by just 3 points, Sturt goalsneak, 'Bo' Morton, one of the most accurate kicks for goal in the league, marked within easy scoring range. With the odds emphatically on a Double Blues triumph, Magpie back pocket Bobby Meers proved an unlikely hero as his yell of "Bo, there's something hanging out of your shorts!" put the Sturt champion off to such an extent that his kick slewed off the side of his boot and out of bounds. According to the rules in force at the time, this meant a free kick to Port,¹⁰⁹ and the Magpies duly retained possession for the final few seconds to clinch arguably the most memorable premiership win in the club's history up to that point. Final scores were Port Adelaide 13.19 (97) to Sturt 14.10 (94).

Under the same Hosking-Dermody leadership pairing the Magpies made it two flags in a row in 1937 after trouncing Norwood by 63 points in the 2nd semi final, and overcoming popular favourites South Adelaide by a comfortable 4 goal margin in the grand final.

¹⁰⁹ Unlike today's rule, the ball did not need to travel out of bounds on the full.

The blue and whites had their revenge over Port in 1938, winning the grand final with somewhat unsettling ease by 46 points, but in 1939 the Magpies, despite the loss of coach 'Shine' Hosking, who had returned to West Torrens as coach, were bolstered by the arrival from Norwood of 'big Bob' McLean, as well as other newcomers in Dick Maynard, Reg Schumann, Claude Greening and 'Brick' Hoffman in their line-up, and were back to their best. This season saw the re-introduction of the boundary throw-in, as well as a revised 'holding the ball/holding the man' rule which placed the onus on the player tackled to relinquish the ball, legally, within a split second of being grabbed.

With reigning best and fairest Bob Quinn, who had earlier been refused a clearance to the VFL, installed as coach in place of Hosking, the Magpies journeyed to Thebarton Oval, the home ground of their former mentor's team, West Torrens, for the opening match of the 1939 season, little realising that it would provide a preview of the grand final. After an absorbing tussle, Port's 'machine-like' style, in which ruckman McLean, proto-ruck-rover Reval, and rover Quinn were especially conspicuous, held sway by 5 goals. Thereafter, the Magpies scarcely put a foot wrong, scoring some memorably emphatic wins, and rounding off the minor round with an 89 point annihilation of Torrens. The following day, war was declared.

For the next few weeks, football no longer dominated the news headlines, and, perhaps not surprisingly, attendances at the first three finals were significantly lower than for many years. Nevertheless, as far as possible, Bob Quinn and the Port hierarchy tried to maintain an atmosphere of 'business as usual' ahead of the 2nd semi final clash with reigning premier South Adelaide, a match in which the Magpies did just enough to qualify for their sixth premierships play-off in succession.

For the grand final, in which Port faced a West Torrens team that had played impressively in overcoming South by 35 points a week earlier, the South Australian football-loving public made a determined effort to forget the

war, turning up in record numbers¹¹⁰ in anticipation of a thrilling spectacle. Unfortunately for everyone except Port Adelaide supporters, it was scarcely that, as the Magpies racked up a grand final record 44 scoring shots in overcoming a decidedly ineffectual West Torrens side by 47 points. Only Port's characteristic waywardness in front of goal prevented a massacre.

Just as in 1914, the Magpies had arrived at a peak of excellence on the eve of war, and just as in the years after 1914 they would be prevented, by the impact of war, from building on that excellence. Indeed, taken as a whole, the 1940s would prove to be Port Adelaide's most unproductive and frustrating decade of the twentieth century, albeit that the team's under-achievement during this period would contribute directly to the recruitment of the man who would prove to be the architect of not only arguably the greatest era in the club's history, but of the 'modern Magpies' (and Power) ethos itself.

While the war was at its peak between 1942 and 1944 the eight SANFL teams formed temporary pairings in order to enable football of league standard to continue to be played despite the drastically reduced numbers of players available. Port Adelaide forged a short-term alliance with West Torrens, winning 72% of all games played, which was comfortably the best overall record of the four teams. However, despite reaching all three grand finals, the alliance managed only one premiership win.

When full-scale league football resumed in 1945, Port Adelaide and West Torrens players found themselves facing a fourth consecutive grand final, although on this occasion they would be adversaries. Having won the minor premiership with 5 wins more than Torrens, and having won both minor round encounters between the sides, the Magpies were warmly favoured to win, and during the early stages of the match they appeared to have everything well under control. At one stage during the 1st half Port led by 32 points, but Torrens refused

¹¹⁰ The official crowd figure was given as 44,885, which was 585 more than the previous record, set in 1924.

to give in, and after half time they displayed superior pace, fitness and will-to-win, and but for poor kicking for goal might easily have won by considerably more than the eventual margin of 13 points. The match was watched by a new grand final record crowd of 47,500.

A noteworthy feature of Port's 1945 season was the addition to its ranks of one of the greatest players ever to grace the game, Haydn Bunton senior. Having won three Brownlow Medals with Fitzroy and three Sandovers with Subiaco, Bunton was, and remains, the most decorated individual in top level football history, and although clearly past his best he gave the Magpies solid service in what proved to be his final 16 games of league football.

The remainder of the 1940s saw Port Adelaide's fortunes decline dramatically, 2nd place to Norwood in 1946 being followed by 3rd in 1947, and then the unthinkable indignity of 2nd from last with just 4 wins from 17 games in 1948. Marginal improvement under the coaching of Reg Schumann followed in 1949, but the team still finished 4 wins and a substantial amount of percentage out of the four. Drastic measures were required, but the Port Adelaide committee was confident that it had earmarked just the right man to get the club back on track. That man was champion South Adelaide and state centremen Jim Deane, popularly regarded, along with Bob Hank of West Torrens, as one of the two best footballers in South Australia.

Deane, it emerged, was very interested in the post, and so all that was required to wrap things up was a clearance from his club, but this was much easier said than done. South, perfectly understandably, regarded Deane as indispensable, and would not release him. Consequently, Port was forced to re-advertise its vacancy, plumping in the end, to the astonishment of many observers, for a man with only 54 games of league football under his belt, Foster Williams of West Adelaide. Despite being widely acknowledged as the most damaging rover in the SANFL, Williams had no previous coaching experience, and was not even captain of his club. Nevertheless, to their immense and everlasting credit, the

members of the club's management committee discerned something gem-like hidden away beneath Williams' raw, craggy exterior.



Lloyd Zucker marks strongly against North Adelaide.

Space does not permit an in-depth analysis of Fos Williams' coaching style, nor a detailed account of his many successes. Those interested in such things will find them in John Wood's excellent account of the history of the Port

Adelaide Football Club between 1939 and 1990, Bound For Glory, as well as in the more recent *Dynasty* by Michaelangelo Rucci. Some key facts are worth highlighting, however. In the first place, Williams, unlike his great rival Jack Oatey, was no purist. Football, for him, was essentially a simple game, in which the most desirable qualities were energy, strength, leg power, stamina and courage - courage, indeed, most of all. Without these qualities a player possessing the combined skill of 'Polly' Farmer, Barrie Robran, Robbie Flower, Gary Ablett and Darrel Baldock would, if let loose in league company, be left floundering like a fish out of water. Williams saw the truth of this matter graphically emphasised almost every time South Australia took the field against the VFL. The South Australians could kick, mark and handle the ball every bit as well as their opponents - until the pressure was applied, after which they tended to perform like fumbling schoolboys. As coach of both Port Adelaide and South Australia, Williams would make it a personal crusade to try to ensure that all of his players took to the field with a mindset which maximised rather than masked their capabilities; in this, he was only partially successful, especially in the interstate arena, but the successes which he did achieve had an enormous impact on raising expectations and standards, as well as on rendering the sport of Australian football in South Australia more overtly 'professional'.

Williams' impact on a somewhat demoralised and under-achieving Port Adelaide side was immediate and pronounced. In his first season in charge the Magpies reached the preliminary final, and the following year saw them impose themselves on the competition in redoubtable fashion. A 2 goal loss to West Torrens at Thebarton in round 9 proved to be the side's only reversal for the year. In the finals, North Adelaide was comfortably accounted for twice, and Port Adelaide had secured one of the most comprehensive premiership triumphs in league history. Half back flanker Alan Greer, renowned for his exhilarating downfield dashes, was best afield in the grand final, with centre half back Ted Whelan not far behind. Future Magarey Medallist Davey Boyd, just twenty-one years of age, gave a veteran's

performance in the centre, while second year Victorian import John Abley gave a hint of what was to come with a miserly performance on the last line of defence.

A week later, Port met VFL premier Geelong in a challenge match on the Adelaide Oval, but poor kicking for goal ruined an otherwise commendable display, and the visitors won by 8 points.

During the remainder of the decade, Port Adelaide contested every grand final bar that of 1952. It lost by 7 points against West Torrens in 1953, and then embarked on a remarkable, if not quite unprecedented, sequence of six consecutive wins. Equally remarkably, the side won minor premierships in 1953-4-5-6-7 and '59, emphatically and repeatedly demonstrating that it was head and shoulders above every other team in the state. This is not to suggest that it was never seriously challenged: indeed, all bar one of its winning grand finals - that of 1955, against Norwood - were closely contested, with only the Magpies' trademark desperation and desire, coupled on occasion with a morsel or two of luck, standing between them and defeat.

Fos Williams actually left Port at the end of the 1958 season, handing the coaching reins over to Geof Motley, but it would be extremely difficult to attribute the club's 1959 premiership success to anything other than the residual effects of the Williams influence. Once this had worn off, a Port team with essentially the same group of players dropped to 3rd place in 1960 and '61, but on Williams' return in 1962 the Magpies immediately rediscovered their accustomed pre-eminence with flags in 1962-3, a runners-up berth in 1964, and another flag - Williams' 9th as coach - in 1965.

Among the surfeit of stars to don the famous black and white during the 1950s and '60s were triple All Australian full back John Abley, Magarey Medallists Geof Motley, Trevor Obst, Russell Ebert, Peter Woite, and the aforementioned Dave Boyd, wingman or centremen John Cahill, whom many regard as the finest SANFL player not to win a Magarey Medal, champion rovers Ray Whitaker and Jeff Potter - not to mention Williams himself, of course, full forwards Rex Johns,

Wally Dittmar, Neil Hawke and Eric Freeman, ruckmen Lloyd Zucker and Ted Whelan, defenders Dick Russell, Roger Clift, Neville 'Chicken' Hayes, Ron Elleway and Dennis Errey - the list could go on and on.

Perhaps the individual best placed to come up with a definitive list of the finest Port players of the Fos Williams era would be the great man himself, and fortunately we have just such a list, for in the late 1990s he selected the following as his 'Best Port Adelaide Team 1950-73':

Forwards:	Paul Marrett	Rex Johns	Jeff Potter
Half Forwards:	Geof Motley	Ian Hannaford	Dave Boyd
Centres:	John Cahill	Russell Ebert	Bruce Light
Half Backs:	Neville Hayes	Roger Clift	Peter Woite
Backs:	Doug Spiers	John Abley	Dick Russell
1st Ruck:	Lloyd Zucker	Ted Whelan	Fos Williams
Interchange:	Brian Luke	Harold McDonald	Ray Whitaker ¹¹¹

On the eve of Fos Williams' final match in a Port jumper, the 1958 grand final, the 'Football Budget' paid glowing tribute to a man it described as a 'football fanatic':

For any footballer whose initial attempt to get into football was rebuffed by Sturt 18 years ago , to retain still the enthusiasm of a raw recruit is amazing. But that's Fos Williams. At 36, and with 202 games behind him, he could now be expected to show a little less interest in the game than before. Not him. Watch him when he picks up the ball for a few handpasses or little kicks in the dressing room before a game. His fingers stretch in anticipation, he grins almost fiendishly, his eyes fairly blaze with excitement.

Williams, carefully chosen to be their playing coach nine seasons ago, when he was a star with West, must become a legend in Port's history. Tales about him are already in the history books of Port gossip. For instance, at the first players' night after he had been appointed coach, an official whispered to him, "We want you

¹¹¹ *Dynasty* by Michaelangelo Rucci, page 301.

to address the team". Williams was aghast. "I've never addressed a crowd before," he replied. That left the official aghast. Between them, they cooked up an address of sorts, which Fos stumblingly got across.

There's no stumbling or halting now. Nor has there been for years. When he likes, he can blister the paint off the clubrooms. He gives himself away, though, when things are going well, and he doesn't want the team to think he is TOO pleased with them, by the tell-tale quiver at the corners of the mouth as he tries to stop smiling.

Perhaps he has had good players to work with. However, the nine years (1950-58) cannot fail to go down in Port's history as the 'Foster Williams Era'. There can be no finer tribute.¹¹²

The 'Foster Williams Era' would last a good deal longer, of course. After his three year 'sabbatical' from 1959-61, which included a season as coach of South Adelaide, Williams would spend another twelve seasons at Alberton. However, the point about 'good players' is well made, and would be reinforced during what at the time was the club's unprecedented 'barren spell' between 1966 and 1976,¹¹³ when clubs which emulated, to an extent, the Port Adelaide style, and which were blessed at the time with better players, put the Magpies temporarily on the back foot. Chief among these clubs were North Adelaide under Mike Patterson, and Neil Kerley's Glenelg. Kerley, a former West Adelaide player and coach, had suffered as much as anyone at the hands of Williams' supreme 1950s and early '60s combinations, and although his own teams were generally regarded as playing with rather more 'science' than the Magpies, they were every

¹¹² 'SA Football Budget', 27/9/58, page 6.

¹¹³ Technically, the eleven year gap between the 1965 and 1977 premierships only equalled the record established between 1939 and 1951. However, full-scale league football was not played between 1942 and '44, and, in any case, the combined Port Adelaide-West Torrens team was successful in procuring the 1942 premiership. Recent seasons have seen the club endure an even longer barren spell, however. As of the start of the 2014 season the Magpies' last SANFL senior grade flag had been procured as long ago as 1999.

bit as aggressive, determined and wholeheartedly committed to the 'one per cent' aspects of the game.



Goalmouth action from Alberton Oval in 1968. Port's Spencer is opposed by Weir and Murphy of Sturt.

Fortunately, Port Adelaide had a man who also recognised the importance, in the context of a modern game which allowed for greater meticulousness of preparation, of superimposing tactical astuteness and intelligence on the

trademark attributes of 'pressure' football. His name was John Cahill, and he would go on to have an overall impact on the club every bit as extensive, pronounced and, one ventures to imagine, lasting as that of his mentor.

Right from the outset of his time as Port Adelaide coach, Foster Williams had exhibited a keen insight into what might be termed the 'harsh realities of football'. For example, the style of play in the South Australian competition might be pleasing to the eye, but it was nothing like as effective, nor as successful, as the style of play favoured by Victorian teams. Within a short space of time, Williams made Port Adelaide the most successful club in the SANFL by the simple expedient of emulating the Victorians. Even more perspicaciously, Williams could see the way that Australian society was developing, and was able to deduce a number of key ways in which that development might impinge upon and influence the sport of Australian football. Writing in 1967, Williams observed,

*football in my view is about half way to what we will finish with. Twenty years from now with in-flow and the opportunities football can win for the talented youngster, we will see talent and discipline in a new light. This will bring a better spectacle, both from the skill of the game and the new teamwork possible through the new discipline of.....professional football.*¹¹⁴

A direct corollary of this, so Williams believed, would be the emergence, in time, of a national competition. Consequently, throughout his tenure as Port coach he took care to ensure that his players had regular exposure to top level, interstate opposition. During the 1950s, the Magpies regularly played post-season matches against leading VFL clubs, while for seven successive seasons in the '60s and '70s pre-season fixtures, either home or away, were arranged with both Melbourne and South Melbourne. Williams' successor as Port coach, John Cahill - invariably known as

¹¹⁴ 'SA Football Budget', 30/9/67, page 4.

'Jack' - played in many of these games, whilst simultaneously absorbing many elements of his mentor's philosophy, both in terms of coaching, and in relation to the game as a whole. Nevertheless, it is extremely doubtful if, on taking up the coaching reins prior to the start of the 1974 season, he could have imagined that, twenty-three years later, he would be doing the same with a Port Adelaide combination venturing, for the first time, onto the national stage.



The Magpies' resolute and reliable full back, Ron Elleway, in action against Glenelg.

It is important to stress that Cahill was by no means slavish or uncritical in his emulation of Williams. Whilst he shared many aspects of his predecessor's outlook, most notably an ardent veneration for courage as the principal building block of effective football, his teams tended to play with considerably greater flair, and to have access to a much broader repertoire of styles. In particular, Cahill believed that a player's responsibilities went beyond merely 'winning his position', and that central to the team ethic was the requirement that he also assist his team mates to win theirs. Consequently, in addition to winning the ball and getting rid of it, à la Fos, Cahill's players were expected to use it intelligently, to the team's advantage. Moreover, implicit in this was a recognition that 'intelligent use of the ball' might often mean the utilisation of something that Williams tended to regard with undisguised disdain - other than when used as a last resort by a player under intense duress - the handpass. Indeed, under Cahill, Port Adelaide teams probably elevated the art of handball to heights never previously managed in the SANFL, not even by Jack Oatey's notoriously 'handball happy' Sturt sides.

In essence, then, Port Adelaide under Jack Cahill rapidly became a much more attacking proposition than the club's fans had perhaps been used to. "I particularly want the players to have an attacking attitude," Cahill observed, shortly before the start of his first season in charge. "By that I mean if they see the ball, I want them to attack it without thinking twice. And if they make a mistake, there must be someone close by backing them up. I don't want them hesitant. I'm encouraging players to attack, even from the full back line..... I know the 'fors' and 'againsts' of this, but that's the way I want it." ¹¹⁵

Paradoxically, a major reason for these divergences from the Williams 'coaching manual' was Cahill's emulation of his mentor's assimilation of interstate coaching ideas. Just as

¹¹⁵ *Gentleman Jack: the Johnny Cahill Story 1958-82* by John Wood, page 70.

Williams had modelled Port's 1950s and '60s style of play on that which was then in vogue in the VFL, so Cahill, as soon as he was appointed, sought advice from leading VFL coaches and players like Tom Hafey, Ron Barassi, John Kennedy and Royce Hart.¹¹⁶ It is hard to imagine Barassi, the man who had masterminded Carlton's famous come from behind win over Collingwood in the 1970 VFL grand final, not singing the praises of the skill to which that victory owed so much, handball. Similarly, Tom Hafey was coach of Richmond which, at the time, was probably the most attack-minded club in the VFL, an orientation which in 1973 had helped procure both the VFL and Australian premierships.



Fos Williams congratulates North Adelaide captain Bob Hammond after the Roosters' victory over Port in the 1972 grand final.

Tactical considerations aside, Cahill undoubtedly had a better pool of players available to him than Williams had enjoyed during the latter part of his tenure. Indeed, the fact that Williams was able to get frankly mediocre Port combinations into grand finals in, for example, 1967 and '68 -

¹¹⁶ Ibid., page 74.

and go within an ace of winning the flag in the former year - probably affords as eloquent a testimony to his greatness as the nine premierships.



The end of one era, and the beginning of another. Jack Cahill, having just played his last game for Port Adelaide, is about to embark on one of the most successful and significant coaching careers of modern times.

The Magpies' progress under Cahill was steady. Having finished 5th during Fos Williams' final season at the helm, they rose to 3rd in 1974, a result that was repeated the following year when, owing to a dispute between the Port Adelaide City Council and the SANFL, the club was forced to play its home matches at the Adelaide Oval. Then came 1976, a season which, in hindsight, can be regarded as a vital

benchmark in the history not only of Port Adelaide, but of the game in general. From the Port Adelaide perspective, it tends to be memorable for all the wrong reasons, but it nevertheless afforded a stimulus for the club's unparalleled achievements of the ensuing two decades.

Forties in Procella ('Strength in Adversity') might well be the motto of the Magpies' most intense and bitter SANFL rival club, Norwood, but late on the afternoon of Saturday 25 September 1976 it could unashamedly have been borrowed by the black and white aficionados among the record crowd of 66,897 packed into Football Park for the season's finale between Port Adelaide and Sturt. Those Port fans had just witnessed their team, which had totally dominated the 1976 SANFL competition, losing only 4 of 21 minor round matches before comprehensively thrashing Glenelg in the 2nd semi final, somehow conspire to lose when it mattered most against an in truth somewhat ordinary Sturt team which nevertheless was able to tap into a rich vein of finals experience, something which Cahill's Magpies sadly lacked.

That single two hour dose of grand final football probably brought the entire Port team completely up to speed in terms of finals experience, however. There is scarcely anything so salutary as losing a game you know you ought to have won, and with no immediate way to right the wrong, Port's 1976 grand final players had simply to re-group, and prepare for the slog, sweat and pain of another season long tilt at the flag.

The 1976 season represented a benchmark in another important way, however, as it witnessed the first legible attempt to move towards a genuinely national club competition. The Wills Cup, which was sponsored by a tobacco company, and conducted by the NFL, involved clubs from the three main football states, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Port Adelaide participated, beating Footscray by 34 points, and losing to North Melbourne by 50 points, but the match results were really of secondary importance. What was of primary significance was that, although the Wills Cup matches were, by and large, poorly

attended, they generated significant amounts of income through sponsorship and television. The VFL was quick to take note: in 1977 it withdrew from the pseudo-national affair to run its own sponsored night competition, and by 1978 it was offering more than twice the prize money of the NFL series (now sponsored by Ardath, and involving teams from the VFA in place of those from the VFL), and enjoyed significantly higher TV ratings, with a concomitant explosion in revenue from peripheral sources such as advertising. In 1979 the VFL formed a company, Australian Football Championship Pty. Ltd., with the objective of developing its own 'national' competition, thereby effectively rendering the NFL irrelevant. In time, all of the other states came to the VFL table because that was where the money was. According to Sandercock and Turner, writing shortly after these events in 1981:

*The VFL's move on night football was nothing short of a take-over bid for Australian football. Its formation of the AFC Pty. Ltd. once again isolated the VFA from the mainstream of national football. It also put a big question mark against the viability of the NFL as a national administration. Some commentators argue that the VFL, with its superior financial resources and business acumen, should run the whole of Australian football. The VFL is certainly convinced that it alone has the expertise to run football at the national level, and it has a compelling financial incentive to press its claim. Whether the VFL razzamatazz is what the game really needs is another question.*¹¹⁷

These comments should be read as a backdrop to the events of 1990, which will be discussed in due course. As of the early 1980s, however, it would seem that Fos Williams' dream of a full-scale national club competition was well on course, although not perhaps in quite the way he might have expected, or indeed would have wished.

¹¹⁷ *Up Where Cazaly?* by Leonie Sandercock and Ian Turner, page 172.

But back in 1977, South Australian football's centenary season, Port Adelaide's sole pre-occupation was with the SANFL premiership, an honour that had eluded it for much too long. The season got off to an excellent start when the council and the SANFL reached agreement on the use of Alberton Oval for football, and over the course of the year fans flocked in in near record numbers to watch the pride of the district in action. They had plenty to cheer as well, as the Magpies endeavoured to put the horrors of the 1976 season firmly behind them with a series of dazzling performances that earned both the minor premiership and numerous accolades. Acutely conscious, however, that there was only ultimately only one game, and one performance, that really mattered, the longer the season wore on, the more the focus of John Cahill and his players was on a potential date with destiny at Football Park on Saturday 24 September.

That day duly arrived, with only John Nicholls' Glenelg side standing between the Magpies and the ultimate prize. On the eve of the big match, Mike Pilkington wrote:

*Memories of the humiliation and disgrace which have plagued Port since this time last year can be wiped out tomorrow. Redemption, and the elation which goes with it, will come to the Magpies in the centenary grand final.*¹¹⁸

Prophetic words indeed, for after a tough, bruising and occasionally spiteful game, the Magpies emerged victorious by 8 points, 17.11 (113) to 16.9 (105). In point of fact, they had the match well won much earlier, but a flurry of late goals by the Bays gave a deceptive closeness to the final scores. For Port captain Russell Ebert, it had been "a bloody long time, but jeez it was worth it!" - sentiments wholeheartedly shared by every supporter of the most loved and loathed footy club in the state.

The Magpies' best player list from the 1977 grand final gives some notion of the wealth of talent which Cahill had

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Wood, op cit., page 91.

at his disposal. Best afield was Brian Cunningham, a plucky and tenacious rover who would later serve the club in a number of administrative capacities. Others to excel included utility Randall Gerlach, who was playing in defiance of medical advice, dynamic and hyper-aggressive wingman Bruce Light, spring-heeled ruck-rover Max James, and 7 goal spearhead Tim Evans.

After the almost inevitable 'premiership hangover' year of 1978, the Magpies bounced back to their best in 1979, initiating a sequence of three successive premierships with a 9.9 (63) to 3.14 (32) grand final victory over South Adelaide in blustery, slippery conditions. Norwood by 18 points in 1980, and Glenelg by 51 points in 1981, were Port's other grand final victims during this run.

After dropping to 3rd in 1982 Port Adelaide entered one of the most discomfiting phases of its long history up to that point. The 1983 season saw coach John Cahill's departure for two years of in-fighting, acrimony and modest achievement with Collingwood, followed by a couple of seasons back in South Australia with West Adelaide. His replacement as Magpie coach was Russell Ebert, who managed a 60% success rate in terms of finals qualification in his five years in charge.

Much more significant, however, were a number of off-field developments, notably in relation to the VFL's ever tightening control over the game's character and destiny. Fully conscious of the way in which the wind had begun to blow, in 1982 the SANFL asked the VFL to consider admitting a composite South Australian team to its competition. Individual clubs such as East Perth and Norwood allegedly did likewise. In most instances, the VFL's response was simply to ignore the approach, which aside from demonstrating rank arrogance on its part, gave the clear impression that it had already concocted its own preferred blueprint for the future of football. As to what that blueprint actually entailed, there was some doubt - a point to which Port Adelaide's 1982 Annual Report made somewhat bitter reference:

*The anticipated composite South Australian side entering the VFL competition did not eventuate and (the) national competition still appears a long way off. One must ask does the 'Big V' want the game to go national, or does it still believe that the bleeding of clubs of their good players in other states is the path to tread? Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia are now coming in for more than their fair share of plundering and yet through it all some clubs in the VFL are declaring huge financial losses and until sanity is restored throughout Australia in the world of Australian Rules football, many more clubs will face financial ruin. The current economic climate is not encouraging and it is incumbent (sic.) upon us all to have a really serious think about where we are going and what we can do for our club.*¹¹⁹

This last sentence takes on somewhat enhanced significance in light of what was to transpire some eight years later, but back in 1983 there appeared to be genuine doubt as to whether the club would still be in existence at all by 1990, let alone endeavouring to embark on a national adventure. Of all the SANFL's clubs, Port Adelaide would appear to have been hit the hardest by the economic difficulties of the early 1980s. Given that it embarked on the 1983 season having won four of the previous six league premierships this may seem strange, but as numerous clubs were to discover in the ensuing couple of decades, on field achievements were no longer the primary benchmark by which success in football was measured.¹²⁰

That Port Adelaide ultimately survived was attributable both to hard work and good business sense, with the latter being unequivocally derived from a somewhat rueful

¹¹⁹ 'Port Adelaide Football Club Inc. Annual Report and Balance Sheet Season 1982', page 11. As to the question of whether the VFL actually had a distinct blueprint for the future of football in mind at this point, I have my doubts. The VFL's pseudo-national expansion process was, I believe, much more a result of knee-jerk economic expediency than careful planning.

¹²⁰ Hawthorn, North Melbourne and Claremont would be other clubs to face extinction or erosion of identity though merger despite considerable on field success. Not even the most powerful football club of the early 21st century, Brisbane, has been immune from economic worries.

recognition that, in the new order of things, the SANFL and its constituent clubs had undergone a significant decline in status. For star Port Adelaide players of this era like Mark Williams, Greg Phillips, Craig Bradley, Bruce Abernethy, Danny Hughes, and Greg Anderson playing for the club that had once, with some justification, regarded itself as the strongest in the land, was no longer an end in itself, but a means towards an end - that end, needless to say, being participation in Australian football's elite competition, the VFL.



Clashes with Norwood are often tempestuous affairs.

After several months of speculation, Jack Cahill returned 'home' to Port Adelaide at the end of a 1987 season that had seen the club, for the second year in a row, bow meekly out of the finals race after two successive losses. As far as veteran Port supporters were concerned, there was a certain element of déjà vu to this return, from which they were

hard pressed not to glean a certain optimism. More than a quarter of a century earlier, in 1962, the great Fos Williams had also made a welcome return to Alberton after a brief time away, and had immediately steered the team to a premiership. Could Jack do the same? There could be no doubting the talent of the players: Greg Phillips and Bruce Abernethy had both returned from Victoria the previous year while still at or close to their peak as players, and with 1988 All Australian Martin Leslie they comprised one of the finest half back lines seen in South Australian football for many years; former Collingwood ruckman Russell Johnston combined guile and great resolve with tremendous leadership qualities; full back Roger Delaney and centreman Stephen Williams were very different, but equally accomplished, players who also shared the enviable ability to kick the ball 'a country mile'; lanky ruck-rover Andrew Obst was beginning to show the form that would make him a star in the VFL with Melbourne; full forward Scott Hodges was developing into a formidable spearhead; centre half forward Darren Smith was elegant, aerodynamic and imposing; and players like George Fiacchi, Tim Ginever, David Brown and Wayne Mahney almost certainly had black and white blood flowing through their veins, so fervent and unadulterated was their commitment to the Magpie cause.

Another possible reason for optimism in 1988, the two hundredth year of Australia's colonisation by Europeans, was that Port Adelaide had, in the past, demonstrated an uncanny and unequalled ability to lift the premiership in years with a special meaning to them. They had done so in 1936, South Australia's centenary year; 1951, when Australia celebrated its fiftieth year since Federation; 1958, the centenary of the game; and 1977, the centenary of the SANFL. What price five out of five?

Right from the outset, it was evident that Jack Cahill's return had lit the touch paper to something special. In round 1, the Magpies were merciless in overwhelming Sturt to the tune of 52 points, and thereafter, although the occasional game was dropped, it was obvious to most observers that

Port Adelaide was the team to beat for the 1988 flag. Any lingering doubts anyone may have had over this were emphatically obliterated on Saturday 17 September when, on an afternoon plagued by gale force winds, the Magpies fronted up to arch rivals Norwood in the 2nd semi final. By half time, Port had 5.14 on the board, while the Redlegs had troubled the scorers just once, for a minor score. Norwood finally managed a goal in the 3rd term, but added just one more for the game in succumbing to one of the most humiliating defeats in the club's history. Final scores were Port Adelaide 10.17 (77); Norwood 2.5 (17).

The Magpies were now playing with a swagger and a confidence that recalled the previous John Cahill era, and which had been notoriously absent for much of Russell Ebert's time in charge. In the grand final, even after Glenelg had dominated much of the opening quarter, one got the impression that the Port players were merely flexing their muscles. When Glenelg's champion ruckman Peter Carey missed a rudimentary set shot for goal right on the quarter time siren his team mates seemed visibly to wilt, an impression that was starkly reinforced over the course of the next couple of terms as the Magpies added 7.8 to 1.4, effectively winning the match in the process. At the final siren the scoreboard showed Port Adelaide comfortable 29 point winners, 12.12 (84) to 8.7 (55), and while it may not have been a particularly eye-catching performance it was hard not to be impressed by the ruthless efficiency with which the Glenelg challenge had been extinguished. Bruce Abernethy won the Jack Oatey Medal after an energetic rather than spectacular display at both half back and in the centre, while David Hynes proved a more than adequate replacement in the ruck for suspended skipper Russell Johnston. Martin Leslie and Greg Phillips were well nigh impassable across the half back line, while full back Roger Delaney kept Max Kruse goalless. Most of all though, it was a performance in which the unglamorous but often decisive elements of team play - shepherding, backing up, talking, tackling, smothering - were consistently and admirably manifested. The 'returning

Messiah', John Cahill, summed up the victory with a characteristic combination of passion and precision:

*We worked very hard for this. It started a year ago..... I suppose. We really had to succeed to prove the committee's decision was right. I was just pleased to come back to Alberton because I love Port Adelaide, it's where I played all and coached most of my football. It's been a very disciplined year both on and off the ground. I thought that as the season wore on we became more and more disciplined and more unselfish as a team unit. The players were prepared to work very hard and expected to work hard and committed themselves both on and off the track.*¹²¹

In 1989, the Magpies lifted their team skills and discipline to new levels, culminating in a 15.18 (108) to 1.8 (14) grand final annihilation of a North Adelaide side that by no means lacked talent, but was simply not permitted to compete. It is easy to imagine certain members of the Port Adelaide board watching this awesome and indeed scarcely credible display and wondering whether their team had somehow out-grown its roots.

This is just speculation, of course. Nine months later, however, the club made a move that effectively split South Australian football asunder when it formally applied to field a team in the Australian Football League (as the VFL had been re-christened the previous year) from 1991. Such a move was in direct defiance of the declared stance of the SANFL, which did not consider that the time was yet right for a South Australian team to enter the AFL. The key word here is 'yet', as there was a tacit admission by the SANFL that there would ultimately come a point when the interests of football in the state would indeed be best served by involvement in the quasi-national competition which was evolving out of the old, suburban VFL. Port Adelaide's actions, however, effectively forced the SANFL's hand; consequently, in a quick fire but nevertheless carefully calculated response, it applied to field a

¹²¹ 'Football Times', 6/10/88, page 3.

team of its own in the AFL. Ultimately, after a modicum of apparent procrastination, it was the SANFL's bid which was accepted, and so the Adelaide Crows were born.



High flying action against Glenelg at Football Park in 1994.

One is tempted to presume in hindsight that this is what the AFL actually wanted all along, and that the Port Adelaide bid, unlike previous approaches from individual clubs, was encouraged and ostensibly treated seriously in order that the AFL might enjoy the benefits (mainly financial) of having a composite South Australian team in the fold somewhat earlier than the SANFL wished.



Port and Sturt players get better acquainted.

If Port Adelaide was indeed the 'fall guy' in all of this it received no sympathy from the non-black and white sections

of the South Australian public. According to popular perception, the club, by its actions, had wrought irreversible division and discord in South Australian football, and there were even some who felt it ought to be excluded from the SANFL. It was not, of course - like it or not, the SANFL still needed Port Adelaide - but what is quite undeniable is that, since the events of 1990, the predominantly 'healthy hatred' which fans of other SANFL clubs felt towards Port Adelaide has been transformed into something altogether more intense, acrimonious and unforgiving. To many South Australian football supporters, Port Adelaide, in both its incarnations, is a veritable pariah.

Seldom has this attitude been more volubly or visibly expressed than at the 1990 SANFL grand final, which pitted 'the pariahs' of Port Adelaide against the club which had reacted most vehemently when news of the Magpies' AFL bid broke, Glenelg. After a tumultuous, topsy-turvy encounter, a battered, bruised but most emphatically unbowed Port combination emerged 15 points to the good, 16.12 (108) to 13.15 (93).

Over the years, Port Adelaide and the people associated with it have positively thrived on the antagonism and detestation of other clubs and their supporters, and during the first half of the 1990s, with such feelings at an all-time high, the Magpies were in their element. With Jack Cahill still providing astute and inspirational leadership, the club won a premiership in 1992, unearthing one of the bona fide champions of the modern game in Nathan Buckley in the process, and after missing out in 1993 it proved its supremacy again in each of the following three seasons. By the time of the 1994 grand final win over Woodville-West Torrens it was clear that the AFL was desirous of admitting a second South Australian-based club to its ranks, and that Port Adelaide was rapidly emerging as its favoured option. By the time of the following season's grand final defeat of Central District the matter was as good as resolved, although the initially preferred year for the club's admission, 1996, was no longer deemed feasible as Fitzroy had had the audacity to defy both

the odds and intense external pressures and continue to exist, and the AFL was adamant that it did not wish to expand its competition beyond sixteen clubs.

In 1996 therefore, Port Adelaide supporters enjoyed one last season devoting their exclusive attention to an SANFL competition in which their heroes performed with the now familiar authority, conviction and, ultimately, courtesy of a 36 point grand final win over Central District, success. David Brown, who won the Jack Oatey Medal for best afield, was one of a dozen members of the Magpies' 1996 senior squad who would be plying their trade with the club's AFL incarnation, the Power, in 1997.

Saturday 29th March 1997, six months after defeating Central District in the 1996 SANFL grand final, Port Adelaide embarked on its 116th season of senior football in the state's premier competition with a 7 point win over Sturt. To all external appearances, it was business as usual - except that, underneath the facade of normality, everything had changed. No longer was the team that took to the field in the trademark black and white prison bar guernseys the primary manifestation of a club that could trace its origins all the way back to 13 May 1870, when John Hart R.W. Leicester, G.Ireland, J.A. Rann, R.Carr and L.Bridgland were voted into office as the inaugural committee of the Port Adelaide Cricket and Football Club. The club's primary manifestation was now playing on a bigger stage, and that very afternoon, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, it took to the field for its first ever fixture in a marginally expanded Victorian Football League competition that now endeavoured to portray itself as possessing a 'national' remit, purview and infrastructure.

While 50,000 fans, luxuriating in warm autumn sunshine at the MCG, watched the Power struggling to cope with the heightened intensity of AFL football, and ultimately going under by 79 points, an assemblage scarcely 5% the size back in Adelaide rolled up for a match that, two decades ago, would quite reasonably have been expected to attract 20,000 spectators, and have dominated the following morning's sports pages. From now on, press coverage of the

Magpies would be negligible and often ill informed, while 'Port Power'¹²² would vie for column inches, if not perhaps adulation, with the state's other AFL representative, the Adelaide Crows.

Clearly, adjustment of a major kind was necessary, but for the first two or three years after the enforced parting of the ways, Port Magpies endeavoured, with some success, to make light of the transition, and to carry on as though nothing had changed. Apart from the reduced attendances and diminished overall profile, one of the key initial problems the club faced was a decline in its playing strength. With no fewer than a dozen of the players who had represented Port in the SANFL in 1996 now with the Power, this decline was appreciable, and in the round 5 ANZAC Day clash with Norwood it was emphasised in the cruellest and most embarrassing way imaginable: it was not just the scale of the Redlegs' victory margin - 122 points, which represented a record defeat for the Magpies - it was the enormity of the apparent gulf in ability that galled. In that one match, perhaps for the one and only time in the illustrious history of Port Adelaide, it was as though the club was performing at a level below league standard.

That the Magpies ultimately recovered to not only participate in the 1997 grand final, their eighth such appearance in ten seasons, but to do so on the back of a 2nd semi final conquest of their ANZAC nemesis speaks volumes for the spirit, determination and drive of everyone connected with the club. Coached by Stephen Williams, son of the legendary Fos, it was clear that, whatever else had been lost, the central tenets of the club's unique and inviolable tradition remained. Those tenets had been famously encapsulated, in the form of a creed, by Fos Williams when he returned to Alberton in 1962 after a three year sojourn. They are eminently worth reproducing here:

¹²² Despite the fact that, particularly in Melbourne and what might be termed the 'anti-Port' sections of the South Australian media, this label for the club continues to be used, it has never, at any stage, constituted the club's name. The club is officially Port Adelaide, with a nickname of 'the Power'.

We the players and management of the Port Adelaide Football Club accept the heritage which players and administrators have passed down to us; in so doing we do not intend to rest in idleness but shall strive with all our power to further this club's unexcelled achievements.

To do this we believe there is great merit and noble achievements in winning a premiership. To be successful, each of us must be active, aggressive and devoted to this cause. We agree that success is well within our reach and have confidence that each member of both the team and management will suffer personal sacrifices for the common end. Also we know that should we, after striving to our utmost and giving our everything, still not be successful, our efforts will become a further part of this club's enviable tradition.

Unfortunately for Stephen Williams and his players, in 1997 it was the final sentence of this creed which ultimately applied as Norwood gained revenge over Port when the two teams met again in the grand final. However, the club's accomplishment in going so close to a premiership when so grossly under-manned would stand it in good stead over the next couple of seasons.

In 1998, despite displaying some worryingly inconsistent form at times, the Magpies finished the season in style, winning their last two minor round matches before comfortably accounting for Central District by 61 points in the elimination final, Norwood in the 1st semi final by an eminently satisfying 76 points, and West Adelaide by 77 points in the preliminary final. The grand final afforded an opportunity for old time footy fans to reminisce, featuring as it did the two great SANFL rivals of the 1960s and '70s, the Magpies and their all too frequent nemesis, Sturt. Pleasingly, however - at least as far as Port supporters were concerned - this time it was to be their beloved Magpies who would emerge triumphant, although as the final margin of just 9 points indicates it was no easy matter. Final scores were Port 11.9 (75) to Sturt 9.12 (66) with the victors best served by rover David Brown, half back flankers Jarred Poulton and

Stephen Carter, centre half forward Brett Chalmers, centreman 'Daisy' Borlase, and half forward Peter Burgoyne. Tellingly, of these six players, only Borlase had not played AFL football. A crowd of 44,838 attended the match, which in some respects represented a kind of 'Indian summer' for the old-style SANFL. It will be extremely surprising if a crowd of such magnitude ever again attends the SANFL's premiership-deciding match.

Having done things the hard way in 1998 by winning the flag after fighting their way through from the elimination final, the Magpies in 1999 took a much more familiar route to success. Having won the minor premiership for the 38th time since 1907 - easily a record - they comfortably overcame the Eagles in the 2nd semi final, and then survived a couple of late scares against a plucky Norwood side in the grand final to edge home by 8 points. Once again, the best players list was dominated by players with AFL experience: former Power player Darryl Poole was best afield, closely followed by ex-Richmond defender Brian Leys. David Brown (ex-Power and Adelaide), Simon Tregenza (Adelaide) and Brett Chalmers (Power) were among the others to shine.

Sadly for the club's supporters, the period since 1999 has been almost uniformly dismal, with the side consistently failing to qualify for the finals. Much more worryingly, by 2003 the Magpies found themselves, in common with a number of other SANFL clubs, in a somewhat precarious financial situation. Regrettably, existence for clubs in what have increasingly come to be regarded as 'feeder leagues' for the AFL - the SANFL, WAFL, VFL and so forth - is an insecure, volatile and thankless affair, where tradition and past importance count for little or nothing.

Having been forcibly and legally estranged since 1997, Port Adelaide's two incarnations, the AFL-based Power and the SANFL-based Magpies were reunited as a single club. In 2014 this reunion was reinforced when the Magpies became an official feeder team for the Power, with all the club's AFL-contacted players eligible to play for the Magpies in the SANFL if not selected by the Power. The Magpies'

playing list is supplemented by fifteen SANFL-contracted players. In the words of Port Adelaide's 2010 AFL Chief Executive Mark Haysman:

Quite simply, we will now be able to say we are the Port Adelaide Football Club, we were established in 1870. We are one club with teams in two competitions -- the AFL and the SANFL and we are the only authentic, traditional club to have entered a team into the AFL from outside of Victoria.¹²³

This state of affairs, whilst obviously an indictment of a competition which, whilst ostensibly "national" in scope and format, remains in truth quintessentially Victorian, nevertheless arguably provides the Port Adelaide Football Club with a potentially strong platform for future growth and a continuation of a tradition of success that now stretches back almost a century and a half.

Port In Perth

Port Adelaide's 1910 Western Australian Tour

[Principal sources: 'The West Australian' of 4 August, 6 August and 8 August 1910]

"I have no hesitation in naming this Port Adelaide team as the best club 18 that has visited W.A., and I am not forgetting Collingwood's two visits, nor those of Essendon, Fitzroy and St Kilda. They were the team they looked." (Dolph Heinrichs, East Fremantle club historian, writing just after world war two)

¹²³ Widely reported in the Australian press on 16th November 2010.

League footballers during the early years of the twentieth century were not well paid, if indeed they were paid at all, but that does not mean that involvement in football at its highest level was devoid of perks. Of these, perhaps the most prized was the opportunity to travel interstate, and to see at first hand parts of Australia that might otherwise remain forever inaccessible. In 1910, for example, at least ten league clubs from the three main football states embarked on interstate or country tours involving a combination of sight-seeing and challenge matches.¹²⁴

Port Adelaide, which by the end of the 1910 season would be able to proclaim itself both premiers of the state, and champions of Australia, commenced its tour of Western Australia with a visit to the Kalgoorlie/Boulder region, a bona fide hotbed of football which provided fifty per cent of the players for the state's 1908 and 1911 carnival teams. There can be little doubt that Port were well aware of the high quality of goldfields football, but for some reason they elected to field a team that was some way below full strength for their match with a GFL combination. Nevertheless, the two sides produced a wonderful exhibition of football, widely regarded as the finest seen on the goldfields up to that point, with the GFL side scoring a superb and wholly meritorious 17 point victory, 12.12 (84) to 9.13 (67).

As far as Port were concerned, however, it was the games on the coast that really mattered. In 1909, East Fremantle had visited Adelaide as part of an eastern states tour, and, on the Jubilee Oval, consigned the Magpies to an embarrassing 21 point defeat, a result which everyone connected with Port was anxious to avenge. They would get the chance to do so in the first of two matches to be played during the coastal phase of their trip.

¹²⁴Melbourne and Norwood visited Tasmania; Geelong, North Adelaide and Fitzroy went to Sydney; Sturt travelled to Ballarat; Collingwood visited Adelaide; and South Fremantle and East Fremantle both journeyed to Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Far and away the most extensive travel, however, was undertaken by Port Adelaide, which ventured to Broken Hill, the West Australian goldfields, and Perth.

Not that this would be easy, for Old Easts were themselves a formidable combination who, in 1910, would secure their eighth premiership in eleven seasons. Smaller and lighter in the main than Port, they were arguably pacier, and their undoubted all-round football talent was amplified by finely honed aggression and excellent teamwork.



Port Adelaide's Jack Mack.

The second coastal match would provide Port with an opportunity to serve as ambassadors for the entire state of South Australia, for it would see the Magpies facing a combination comprised of players from all eight WAFL clubs - in other words, a virtual state team. This was clearly the pinnacle of the trip, and the only match in which Port elected to field a full strength side. It was a match which lived up to expectations in every sense, but the fact that it was not played in Victoria and did not involve VFL clubs has meant that it has been almost completely forgotten.

**Game One: East Fremantle vs. Port Adelaide, Wednesday
3rd August 1910**

".....it is safe to say that such high marking and so much of it have not been seen here for many a day. When Harvey Kelly, Dolph Heinrichs and Goddard were playing on the coast football enthusiasts were treated to something of the same kind of thing, but

we never had six or eight of those champions in the one team as the Ports have now." ('The West Australian', Saturday 6 August 1910)

The match took place at the WACA ground, in splendid, dry weather, with experienced umpire Ivo Crapp in charge. The attendance was undoubtedly adversely affected by a tram strike, but was nevertheless quite satisfactory for a Wednesday afternoon game, and raised receipts of £80. Heavy overnight rain had left the cricket wicket area somewhat slippery, but the rest of the playing surface was dry and firm.

The Teams

Old Easts were minus only Dave Christy from what might be adjudged their first choice eighteen, while Port were without just two key players in 'Shine' Hosking and Horrie Pope.

EAST FREMANTLE: Beswick, Bailey, S.Doig, Jas Doig (captain), Chas Doig, Clive Doig, Craig, Sharpe, Parsons, Spence, N.Wrightson, C.Wrightson, Corkhill, Curran, Riley, Robinson, Sweetman, Strang

PORT ADELAIDE: Callinan, Curnow, Cavanagh, Congear, Dewar, Dempster, Mason, Manson, Magor, McEwen, McFarlane, Mack, Oliver, Middleton, Rose, Woollard (captain), Hansen, Stidston

1st Quarter

"The visitors were a fine, strapping set of athletes with height, weight and reach to back up a thorough knowledge of football." They played a hard, physical game involving prolific use of handball, and aerially they were much superior to the locals. When the ball was on the ground, however, Old Easts displayed superior pace and considerable cleverness, factors which more or less compensated for Port's supremacy in other areas.

The opening term provided a see-saw struggle, with the ball moving rapidly from one end of the ground to the other. On balance, the home side probably enjoyed slightly more of the play, both territorially and in terms of possession, but when the quarter time bell rang there was nothing separating the teams on the scoreboard.



Sydney Parsons (East Fremantle)

QUARTER TIME: East Fremantle 2.1 (13); Port Adelaide 2.1 (13)

2nd Quarter

The second quarter was a vastly different affair, with the visitors dominating all over the ground - "as one spectator observed, it wasn't a match at all, it was a

procession, in which the local men took the part of onlookers". With Port's players, on average, almost a stone heavier than their opponents, some members of the Old Easts team were made to look like schoolboys. Only twice during the term did the blue and whites manage to convey the ball into their attacking zone, and both times "it was returned with a rapidity that was electrifying".



Port all-time great, Sampson "Shine" Hosking.

Whereas Port handled the ball smoothly and with great assurance, the Old Easts players often seemed overwhelmed by the sheer physicality of the opposition, and were prone to much fumbling and hesitancy. Nevertheless, they defended with a certain degree of conviction and no small amount of skill, and the Magpies' tally of 2.5 for the quarter was scant reward for their superiority. As the home side's skipper Jas Doig would no doubt have emphasised to his players in the changing rooms during the half time interval, the game was far from over.

HALF TIME: Port Adelaide 4.6 (30); East Fremantle 2.1 (13)

3rd Quarter

If Port's dominance during the second term had perhaps led many onlookers to assume that the match was over bar the shouting, the ferocity and passion with which Old Easts hurled themselves into the fray during the third quarter made it clear that this was very far from being the case. Although the visitors continued to exhibit football of the highest order, they did so only intermittently; in between, they had their hands full trying to contain an exuberant and extremely pacy local combination who were as buoyant and cocksure in this term as they had been tentative and cowed in the previous. By kicking 2.3 to 1.2 in this quarter Old Easts left the game beautifully poised at the final change. **Three Quarter Time: Port Adelaide 5.8 (38); East Fremantle 4.4 (28)**

4th Quarter

The final term provided spectators with some of the finest football seen in Perth for many years, with both sides contributing to the spectacle. Old Easts were out of the blocks faster, and for the first fifteen minutes of the quarter were much the better team. Port, however, showed just as much skill defending as they had demonstrated earlier in attack, and with ten minutes remaining all the blue and whites

had managed to add to their score was a single goal, leaving them still 5 points adrift. Old Easts continued to press forward, however, and when Riley marked well within range of goal it elicited the noisiest response of the afternoon from the sparse but enthusiastic crowd. After prudently selecting a dry patch of turf, Riley placed the ball, carefully measured his run up, and focused his eyes on the two central uprights. The crowd held its collective breath as he trotted up to the ball - then groaned with disbelief as he failed to connect properly and sent the ball straight into the waiting arms of a Port Adelaide defender. The Magpies gratefully spirited the ball away, and minutes later posted their sixth, and match-sealing, goal. The final few minutes were dominated by the visitors, and when the bell rang the scoreboard showed **Port Adelaide 6.10 (46); East Fremantle 5.4 (34)**.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Port Adelaide	2.1	4.6	5.8	6.10	46
East Fremantle	2.1	2.1	4.4	5.4	34

BEST - Port Adelaide: Oliver, Curnow, Congear, Dewar, Hansen, Magor, Dempster **East Fremantle:** Sharpe, Chas Doig, Parsons, Sweetman, Clive Doig, Craig, C.Wrightson

GOALS - Port Adelaide: Hansen, Woollard 2; Callinan, Cavanagh **East Fremantle:** Chas Doig 2; Bailey, Robinson, Sweetman

Game Two: WAFL vs. Port Adelaide, Saturday 6th August 1910

“The local combination is by no means, on paper at any rate, as strong as it could be made, but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that the opposing side represents only one South Australian club, and it is a big thing to pit it against an eighteen picked from eight strong clubs in Western Australia. Nevertheless,

the Ports are a stalwart lot of footballers, and in their match against the old Easts on the WACA ground last Wednesday, they gave an exhibition of that strong, vigorous, telling play that marks them as champions. There are some wonderful aerial explorers amongst them, and the beauty of it is that they can all hold the ball and kick with some purpose. They did not shine out in ground play on Wednesday, but the greasiness of the arena may not have suited them so well as it did the light Easts. Today they will be on a turf on which they can be absolutely sure of their footing, no matter what the weather is like, and they should be able to improve considerably upon the fine exhibition they gave three days ago."

The match, played at Fremantle Oval, took place in sunny, dry, mild weather, with the playing surface in superb condition. The attendance of approximately 6,000 was a record for a match on the coast, as were the receipts of £273 13s 6d.¹²⁵ The contest which ensued was worthy of both the fine weather and the superb crowd, "for it was full of incident, and it fairly sparkled from end to end with flashes of brilliant play" – "one of the best games ever seen on the coast".

As intimated above, according to the writer in 'The West Australian', the League combination was not the strongest available, with at least five players arguably being included on the basis of past reputations rather than current form. However, "such men as strip for Port Adelaide at present might..... with confidence tackle the best team this state could put in the field".

The Port Adelaide combination was stronger than that which had defeated East Fremantle in that their champion centreman, Sampson 'Shine' Hosking, was fit to take his place in the side; Stidston was the player to make way.

Port Adelaide certainly looked the part; their players, virtually to a man, were magnificent physical specimens,

¹²⁵Record Western Australian receipts – about £36 more than for the combined coast game - had been gleaned at the previous week's match between a Goldfields combination and Port Adelaide in Boulder.

athletic, muscular and imposing. Moreover, they played game as it should be played – few frills, hard but fair, and almost always straight down the middle from goal to goal. Outstanding features of their play included exceptional high marking, prodigious kicking, judicious and varied use of handball, terrific pace, and unwaveringly direct methods.

The Teams

WAFL Combination: H.Cordner (Perth - captain), A.Robinson (East Fremantle), H.Morgans (Subiaco), H.Sharpe (East Fremantle), D.Rogers (Perth), C.McKenzie (East Perth), S.Parsons (East Fremantle), C.Waugh (Perth), J.Jones (North Fremantle), G.Oakley (Subiaco), G.Balme (West Perth), A.Hesford (East Perth), A.Spence (East Fremantle), W.Crawford (East Perth), J.Beswick (East Fremantle), J.Hesketh (Midland Junction), T.Willoughby (Perth), W.Orr (Perth)

Port Adelaide: J.Middleton, F.Hansen, A.Congear, H.McEwen, H.Oliver, J.Woollard (captain), W.Manson, S.Hosking, H.Dewar, E.Mason, H.Rose, F.Magor, T.McFarlane, C.Cocks, G.Dempster, E.Callinan, F.Curnow, J.Mack

Seven of the eight WAFL clubs had at least one player in the combined side, the somewhat surprising exception being South Fremantle. Not only were South one of the strongest teams in the competition in 1910, eventually finishing 4th, but the match was being played on their own home ground.

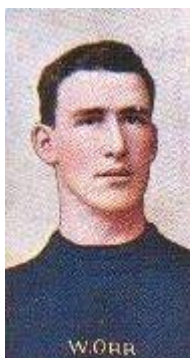
Match Report

The WAFL combination lined up in all blue, while the visitors were in their usual black and white striped jumpers, with black shorts, and black and white hooped hose.

Play in the opening term was “decidedly even” although “two capital shots” from the Perth pair of Billy Orr

and Dave Rogers helped the West secure a narrow quarter time advantage, 2.3 (15) to 1.4 (10). Port Adelaide appeared to be stronger in the air, and their kicking was superior, but the West Australians were proving generally more effective at ground level. Moreover, despite the fact that they had never played together before, they were also combining well, and some of their team play was excellent.

The second quarter saw the home side assume control, and produce some stunning football, to open up a healthy 17 point advantage, 4.8 (32) to 1.9 (15). For the only time in the match, Port's players seemed slower than their opponents, who were roared on with rapturous enthusiasm by the parochial, but by no means unsporting, crowd.



Perth's Victorian-born rover Billy Orr.

In the third quarter, just as they had during the second term against Old Easts, Port produced a concerted display of tremendous football to completely turn the tables on their opponents. Only in kicking for goal was there any noticeable deficiency. Time after time Oliver, at centre half forward, soared above the packs to take telling, one grab marks, and as the quarter went on his dominance began rubbing off on players like McEwen, Hansen and Congear, who hitherto had scarcely been sighted. Around the packs,

Mack became just as hyperactive and effective as Orr had been for the west earlier. Seventeen points adrift as the quarter commenced, Port took just fourteen minutes to capture the lead, and had their kicking been straighter they might well have put the game out of the coastal combination's reach. As it was, they added 4.7 for the term, while the westerners managed just two serious forward forays, which yielded a solitary point, so that at the final change the scoreboard showed the visitors on 5.16 (46) leading the home side 4.9 (33).

The WAFL combination started the last quarter determinedly, and managed the first score, a behind. Port, however, hit back in sterling fashion, and soon had their sixth major on the board.

The remainder of the term saw the West Australians dominate territorially, with Port defending desperately, albeit with considerable skill. Nevertheless, the Western Australian team gradually clawed their way back into the game, and with five minutes left the scoreboard read Port Adelaide 6.17 (53); WAFL 6.10 (46). A scrambled behind to the west soon followed which left them needing just one straight kick to tie the match.

With three minutes to go, they were presented with a golden opportunity to do so, but Harry Cordner, having marked well within range, and almost straight in front, somehow conspired to kick the ball out on the full a good thirty yards wide of the posts. The crowd groaned in disgust. How Cordner responded, or might have felt, is unrecorded.

Moments later, the west added another scrambled behind, but the final two minutes saw Port cleverly maintaining possession to run out 5 points winners, 6.17 (53) to 6.12 (48).

The best player afield was Hosking, who "was opposed by Waugh, who has time and again proved his worth in that portion of the field, and as evidence of the wonderful dash and skill of the Port Adelaide man it may be mentioned that the plucky and diminutive Perthite was completely

outclassed on the day's play. Round about the centre it was Hosking first, last and all the time."

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Port Adelaide	1.4	1.9	5.16	6.17	53
WAFL Combination	2.3	4.8	4.9	6.12	48

BEST - Port Adelaide: Hosking, Oliver, Hansen, Magor, Rose, Dempster, Mason **WAFL:** Parsons, Hesford, Spence, Oakley, Beswick, Willoughby, Orr (1st ½)

GOALS - Port Adelaide: Hansen, Oliver 2; Callinan, Mack **WAFL:** Morgans 2; McKenzie, Orr, Rogers, Waugh

ATTENDANCE: 6,000 approximately at Fremantle Oval

The End Of An Era

1990 SANFL Grand Final: Port Adelaide vs. Glenelg

In July 1990, the South Australian football landscape underwent a dramatic and permanent change when Port Adelaide, in defiance of the declared stance of the state controlling body, the SANFL, submitted a unilateral application to field a team in the AFL, a competition which, at the time, was undergoing a gradual transformation from a predominantly Victorian (albeit with considerable attention being bestowed on it from interstate) to a genuinely quasi-national concern. From Port Adelaide's perspective, the move was born of desperation, and was tantamount to a survival measure, as the club hierarchy was increasingly of the view that the club had, for many years, effectively been propping

up an ailing local football infrastructure, an infrastructure which simultaneously was stifling the club's own development, and undermining and inhibiting its potential.



Port skipper Russell Johnston.

This view was certainly not shared by the majority of the state's football supporters, who responded with almost universal scorn and dismay, feelings implicitly echoed by the SANFL when, in a quick fire but nevertheless carefully calculated response, it applied to field a team of its own in the AFL. Such a move had, in truth, long been on the SANFL's agenda, but the SANFL would have preferred the luxury of deciding on the timing for itself. Port's decision to 'go it alone' in effect forced the SANFL's hand, but the fact that it was the SANFL's application which was ultimately successful did nothing to dull the feelings of bitterness and betrayal felt towards the Magpies by a large proportion of South Australia's football community.

Such feelings inevitably gave the 1990 SANFL grand final, which featured the arch villain of the piece in Port Adelaide, together with one of its most outspoken antagonists in Glenelg, of its something of an extra edge. However, whatever your perspective on its political backdrop, the actual game itself was one which evoked superlatives, as both teams produced football of the highest order, in a Football Park cauldron which simmered, and occasionally boiled over,

with a rousing mix of tension, occasionally reckless aggression and spite.



Chris McDermott, captain of Glenelg.

Even leaving aside the controversies arising out of Port Adelaide's AFL bid the two protagonists in the 1990 SANFL grand final could look back on a long, and at times intensely bitter, rivalry. Glenelg's first ever flag, in 1934, had been at Port Adelaide's expense, while in recent times the sides had contested the premiership on 3 occasions, in 1977, 1981 and 1988, with the Magpies successful each time. In their premiership meetings in 1990, the teams had been evenly matched, Port's 20 point victory in round 12 being sandwiched between wins to the Tigers in round 3 (by 26 points) and the 2nd semi final (by 11 points). Both sides had finished the minor round well ahead of the chasing pack, and this superiority had been emphatically confirmed during the finals series, most notably of all during the previous weekend's preliminary final in which Port had put North Adelaide conclusively to the sword to the tune of 91 points. In that same match, however, the Magpies had lost key players in the shape of David Brown and Rohan Smith to injury, and these losses appeared to tip the scales very slightly in Glenelg's favour in the run up to the grand final.

Much attention during the game would be focused on Port Adelaide's robust full forward Scott Hodges, winner of the 1990 Magarey Medal, who went into the match just 4 goals adrift of the all-time record of 151, set by Sturt's Rick Davies in 1983.

On a glorious spring day in front of a sell-out crowd of 50,589 spectators, the Magpies' Russell Johnston won the toss and chose to kick to the southern end of Football Park which, according to Channel 9 commentator Graham Campbell was worth "3 or 4 scoring shots". For the last time until Port Adelaide's elevation to AFL ranks in 1997, a South Australian football crowd was about to see the best two teams in the state go head to head.

1st Quarter

12 mins Marshall collects the ball for the Bays at centre half back but is forced to handball waywardly under pressure. Abernethy reaches the loose ball first and quickly fires off a low trajectory handpass to Hutton, who is positioned right on the 50 metre line approximately 15 metres left of centre. Hutton handballs to Mahney, who is immediately wrapped up in a tackle but manages nevertheless to squeeze out a handball to Ginever whose quick, round-the-corner snapshot falls a couple of metres short but, fortunately for Port Adelaide, right into the waiting hands of Hodges. From point blank range the 1990 Magarey Medallist is never going to miss. **Port Adelaide 1.5; Glenelg 0.2**

14 mins Johnston, having been awarded a free kick just backward of centre, sends a wobbly, floating drop punt towards the true centre half forward position where Mahney, tumbling forward, marks on his chest before perfectly bisecting the uprights. **Port Adelaide 2.5; Glenelg 0.2**

15 mins From the ensuing centre bounce, Rod Jameson collects the ball and delivers a towering drop punt in the direction of John Fidge in the right forward pocket, but Fidge's opponent, Ben Harris, manages to effect a powerful spoil. Glenelg rover Mansell, however, is first to the ball, and, in the process of being tackled, just manages to feed off to

Jameson, who has followed his original kick upfield. Jameson's hurried left foot snap from 35 metres out never gets more than a couple of metres off the ground but nevertheless somehow evades every Port defender before bouncing twice in the goal square and through for full points.

Port Adelaide 2.5; Glenelg 1.2

18 mins Hallahan's low, spearing pass reaches Liptak midway between centre half forward and half forward left, and the Bay youngster, tumbling forward, just manages to grab the ball a matter of centimetres above the turf. His kick is true. **Port Adelaide 2.5; Glenelg 2.2**



Magpie full forward Scott Hodges prepares to kick for goal.

Before play can be resumed, a sudden flare up, involving perhaps a dozen players, and in which Port's David Hynes and Wayne Mahney appear to feature prominently, breaks out near centre half forward for the Magpies, but the situation is quickly defused after the umpires award a free kick to Glenelg near the centre of the ground.

23 mins As Darren Smith is lining up for goal having marked some 45 metres out on the right half forward flank, Glenelg's Jameson floors Stephen Williams off the ball and Smith is promptly awarded a 50 metre penalty which brings him right up to the goal line. The result is inevitable, and the din from the Port fans deafening. **Port Adelaide 3.5; Glenelg 2.2**

26 mins Port Adelaide mop up at half back right as Rizonico extracts the ball from a pack and handballs to eventual Jack Oatey Medallist George Fiacchi who, with the rare luxury of several seconds in which to weigh up his options, makes a rare mistake by kicking across the face of goal and completely missing his chosen target in the shape of Richard Foster and instead planting the ball perfectly in the path of Glenelg's Brett Deane. With Foster bearing down on him, Deane handballs forward to Fidge whose stampeding run towards goal through heavy traffic is peremptorily halted by a head high tackle from Port's original culprit, George Fiacchi. From the ensuing free kick which sees him lining up for goal less than 20 metres out, directly in front, the solidly built Bay spearhead casually splits the centre. **Port Adelaide 3.5; Glenelg 3.2**

28 mins Hynes on left centre wing kicks long to centre half forward where Duthy successfully spoils Hodges from behind, only to see the ball bounce straight to Settre, who has just entered the fray from the interchange bench. Settre's initial attempt to score is blocked, but following up he manages to collect the ball again and, deep in the left forward pocket, makes perfect amends with a left foot snap that travels predominantly along the ground and through for a major score. **Port Adelaide 4.5; Glenelg 3.2**

30 mins Mansell tackles Foster near half forward right for the Tigers. The ball drops loose, and Mansell manages to collect it himself before sending a low centering kick towards the front edge of the goal square, where Fidge and Harris contest. The Bay full forward has too much body strength for the former Brisbane Bear, and manages simultaneously to mark and send his opponent crashing to the ground, before

trotting into an open goal to reduce the arrears to **3 points**.

Port Adelaide 4.5; Glenelg 4.2

31 mins Glenelg, through the agency of Matthew Liptak, effect another clean centre clearance which again produces a goalmouth marking duel featuring Harris and Fidge. This time the Port man gets his right hand to the ball first, but Fidge has already unbalanced him and, as he falls to ground, the ball rolls down his arm, allowing Fidge to snatch it up and effortlessly register his third 6 pointer of the term. Glenelg have hit the front for the first time in the match. **Glenelg 5.2; Port Adelaide 4.5**



George Fiacchi (Port)

With Glenelg very much in the ascendancy, and Port Adelaide hanging on desperately, the siren sounds a couple of minutes later with no addition to the score. The Bays have won the ball out of the centre on 7 occasions compared to their opponents' 3, but around the ground the contest has been fairly even, with both sides tackling ferociously and maintaining a consistently high level of pressure.

QUARTER TIME: Glenelg 5.2 (32); Port Adelaide 4.5 (29)

During the quarter time interval, Channel 9 boundary rider Rick Davies observes that the wind direction has now changed, and appears to be favouring the northern end of Football Park. However, its strength has also declined somewhat, so that its impact on scoring is likely to be negligible.

2nd Quarter

18 mins After the 2nd quarter has begun in much the same fashion as the 1st, with the defensive qualities of both sides paramount, Hodges registers the opening goal of the term from a free kick for "in the back" awarded 35 metres from goal on the left hand side, on an angle of 45 degrees. **Port Adelaide 5.7; Glenelg 5.6**

20 mins Hodges procures his 3rd goal of the game, bringing him to within 1 of the record, after marking unopposed 30 metres from goal directly in front. **Port Adelaide 6.7; Glenelg 5.6**

23 mins Tregenza collects a loose ball near the right centre wing boundary, adroitly skirts around the onrushing Symonds, and propels a carefully weighted centering kick towards the true centre half forward position where Mark Williams, under intense pressure, takes a juggling mark. Taking his time, Williams walks back, meticulously pulls up his socks, and calmly slots home the Magpies' 7th. **Port Adelaide 7.7; Glenelg 5.6**

24 mins In Port Adelaide's right forward pocket, Hodges crashes heavily to the ground after an aerial contest with Bartlett and Duthy. After receiving attention from the trainers, he staggers to his feet, but it is immediately obvious that he is in no fit state to continue, and he is half led, half carried from the arena to be replaced by Phelps. Is Davies' record safe?

25 mins Fidge sends a high, centering kick from deep in the right forward pocket to the front edge of the goal square where Murphy, tumbling forward, takes a fingertip mark from which he has no trouble converting. **Port Adelaide 7.7; Glenelg 6.6**

26 mins Hynes wins the tap at the ensuing centre bounce, and the ball is fielded by Abernethy who squeezes a kick towards centre half forward where it's collected by Ginever. With opposition players all around him, the gritty Magpie rover manages to pick out the one team mate in the vicinity, Adrian Settre, who is promptly slung to the ground by Scott Salisbury, but who nevertheless still manages to get boot to ball. The kick eludes everyone before bouncing 20 metres from goal and rolling onwards through the vacant goal square and over the line for full points. How the ball has managed to elude every Bay defender is a mystery. Is God a Portonian? **Port Adelaide 8.7; Glenelg 6.6**



Rod Jameson (Glenelg)

28 mins Hutton's cumbersome looking left foot kick from deep in the left forward pocket reaches the teeth of the goal square before coming off hands to the waiting Settre. In one fluid movement, Settre, a couple of metres from goal and slightly to the left of the left goal post, maneuvers the ball to his left boot and propels it over the heads of a couple of Tiger defenders and through for a miraculous goal. With 3 majors in as many minutes, Port has made an important and, with the benefits of hindsight, match-winning break. **Port Adelaide 9.7; Glenelg 6.6**

30 mins Hutton picks up the ball midway between centre and left centre wing and kicks 20 metres directly forward to

the unmarked Stephen Williams who turns, ambles forward and, from a distance from goal of fully 60 metres, unleashes a prodigious drop punt that never deviates as its sails straight through the centre. **Port Adelaide 10.7; Glenelg 6.6**

31 mins As the half time siren sounds, Liptak marks on his chest 35 metres from goal in line with the right point post, but his kick floats away to the right for a minor score, thereby depriving Glenelg of a crucial morsel of comfort heading into the long break.

HALF TIME: Port Adelaide 10.7 (67); Glenelg 6.7 (43)

3rd Quarter

Port fans were relieved and gratified to see Scott Hodges, albeit with a heavily strapped left knee, lining up in his customary full forward position at the start of the 3rd term. However, Magpie skipper Russell Johnston, who it emerged had turned an ankle, did not re-appear.

5 mins Northeast spoils Liptak's attempt to mark on the 50 metre arc directly in front of the Glenelg goal. The ball bounces to Salisbury, who has time to run inside 50, steady onto his right foot, and effortlessly split the centre with a titanic drop punt. In the Channel 9 commentary box, Salisbury's former coach, Graham Campbell, expresses astonishment, remarking that he was unaware that the Bay back pocket man was capable of running so fast, or kicking so long. **Port Adelaide 10.7; Glenelg 7.7**

10 mins Salisbury picks up the ball at centre half back, but on this occasion he is caught flat footed by Wanganeen, whose tackle jolts the ball loose some 15 metres nearer to goal. Showing Salisbury a clean pair of heels, Wanganeen sprints forward, taps the ball ahead of himself once, and then gathers it up before arcing 'round onto his left foot and, from 25 metres out straight in front, prodding a low, purposeful drop punt right through the centre of the goals. **Port Adelaide 11.8; Glenelg 7.8**

12 mins From a boundary throw in on right centre wing for the Tigers, Melican taps the ball to Chigwidden who, despite being immediately gang tackled, is able to find his skipper McDermott with a handpass. McDermott has time to steady himself and look downfield for options. Spotting Fidge on a fast lead in the right forward pocket McDermott lofts the ball towards him and, despite Harris' uncompromising attempt to spoil, the behemoth-like Bay spearhead holds the mark. Close to 40 metres out on a tight angle, Fidge takes almost a minute to settle himself before trotting in and reducing the margin to 18 points. **Port Adelaide 11.8; Glenelg 8.8**

14 mins Hodges comes careering out from goal to meet the ball at centre half forward. Crashing through a pack of players, he scoops the ball up and feeds off to Ginever, whose quick, almost reflex handball finds Gavin Wanganeen running in towards goal. Wanganeen closes to within 35 metres before, with great deliberation, stabbing the ball over the head of Ross Gibbs in the goal square for a magical 6 pointer. **Port Adelaide 12.8; Glenelg 8.8**



A youthful Gavin Wanganeen (Port).

18 mins Christie marks at half forward right for the Bays and promptly plays on with a low handball infield to Deane. The fair-haired rover's high left foot kick travels as far as the front edge of the goal square and is marked by Murphy, who manages to avoid the waiting pack by running in from the side

at the last moment. With all the opposition players in the vicinity flat-footed, Murphy has the easiest of tasks to run on into an open goal and elicit a tumultuous roar from the Tiger hordes. **Port Adelaide 12.8; Glenelg 9.9**

Before play can resume, umpire Rick Kinnear is forced to leave the field with a leg injury; he is replaced by Laurie Argent.

23 mins From midway along the right boundary of the centre square Darren Smith sends a high, floating kick in the direction of centre half forward. The ball comes down rapidly, deceiving the waiting pack, but falling straight into the arms of the unmarked Stephen Williams. The future Magpie coach plays on quickly and, spotting Hodges on a lead just to the right of the goal square, pinpoints that player with a low, left foot drop punt. Despite strong pressure from Jameson, Hodges manages to get his right hand to the ball, tapping it into the air before diving headlong to mark securely on the chest. Having already missed 3 goal scoring opportunities of varying degrees of difficulty this term a goal is by no means assured, but Hodges, despite obviously still favouring his uninjured right leg, kicks cleanly through the ball to secure full points. **Port Adelaide 13.9; Glenelg 9.9**

29 mins Fidge's miss from a comparatively easy set shot for goal seconds before the three quarter time siren brings the Tigers to within 22 points of their rivals, but with Port Adelaide having last use of a strengthening breeze the prospects of a fight back appear remote.

THREE QUARTER TIME: Port Adelaide 13.9 (87); Glenelg 9.11 (65)

During the break between quarters Rick Davies, who has been listening to Glenelg coach Graham Cornes addressing his team, observes that the atmosphere in the Tiger camp appears downcast, almost as if the players have accepted that they are going to lose. Changing tack, Davies then goes on to proffer the hope that Scott Hodges

can cap a marvellous season by breaking his own, 7 year old SANFL goal kicking record.

Meanwhile former Magpie champion Brian Cunningham, who has been eavesdropping at the Port Adelaide huddle, reports that John Cahill has instructed his players to boot the ball long at every opportunity, thereby capitalising on the strengthening breeze.

4th Quarter

3 mins Tony Symonds, just forward of left centre wing for the Tigers, finds David Marshall with a low, 25 metre pass. Immediately after marking, the talented Bay centreman is brought clattering to earth by his direct opponent, Bruce Abernethy, whereupon the umpire awards a 50 metre penalty, bringing Marshall to within 20 metres of goal, almost directly in front. With his 16th kick of the afternoon, he makes no mistake. **Port Adelaide 13.9; Glenelg 10.11**



Bay back pocket, Ross Gibbs.

6 mins A quick Port Adelaide break-out from defence culminates in Settre finding Hodges at centre half forward, and the Magpie spearhead, who now appears to be moving a little more freely, has no trouble in claiming his 152nd goal of the season, and a new League record. **Port Adelaide 14.9; Glenelg 10.11**

9 mins Stephen Williams on Port Adelaide's left wing propels a probing 50 metre kick to just inside the 50 metre arc where it is met full on by a rampaging Scott Hodges, who simultaneously marks the ball on his chest, and sends opponent John Seebohm flying. From dead on 50 metres out and on a 45 degree angle to the left of goal Hodges gives no signs of any discomfort as he steers his kick effortlessly through the goals. **Port Adelaide 15.10; Glenelg 10.11**

13 mins Tregenza's high kick from half forward right to the front edge of the goal square is contested in the air by Hodges and Duthy and spins off hands behind them. Running in unattended, Darren Smith times his arrival perfectly to enable him to collect the ball and trot onwards into an open goal to claim the easiest 6 pointer of the match. **Port Adelaide 16.10; Glenelg 10.11**



Bruce Abernethy (Port)

15 mins Melican, who is 50 metres from the Bay goal, directly in front, collects Murphy's pass on the first bounce, spots Fidge on a lead 30 metres downfield, and picks him out perfectly with a low, left foot pass. Fidge catches the ball cleanly, but holds onto it for less than a second before having it punched away by a fast arriving Ben Harris. The umpire, however, adjudges that Fidge had sufficient control of the ball to be awarded the mark, and, from a distance of 25 metres slightly to the right of goal, the former Brisbane Bear coolly

registers his 5th goal of the game, and his 124th of the year.

Port Adelaide 16.10; Glenelg 11.11

22 mins Seebohm marks Northeast's wayward kick at centre half back and promptly feeds off to Duthy. The former Fitzroy defender gallops off through the centre corridor, bouncing the ball twice and then feinting to kick. The feint successfully invites the attempted smother, which Duthy adroitly sidesteps, before bouncing the ball a 3rd time and delivering a perfectly weighted pass to Christie, who marks 45 metres from goal, directly in front, and nonchalantly converts.

Port Adelaide 16.11; Glenelg 12.13



Glenelg's John Seebohm.

25 mins Jameson delivers to half forward left for the Tigers, where Fidge and Harris contest the mark. Harris just manages to get a fist to the ball first before plummeting to ground, allowing Fidge to collect the loose ball, wheel 'round onto his right foot and, with Chigwidden providing the shepherd to impede the now recovered Harris, unleashing a prodigious drop punt which comes down either on, or just over, the goal line, where it's marked by Murphy. The goal umpire decides that the ball had been in play when marked (although slow motion TV replays appear to refute this), and so Murphy has the straightforward task of registering the Tigers' 13th goal. **Port Adelaide 16.11; Glenelg 13.13**

With some 5 minutes of playing time still remaining, Glenelg have every chance to stage a comeback. However, Port Adelaide prove to be too professional, deliberately slowing the play down and playing possession football to limit their opponents' scoring opportunities, before ultimately running out winners by 15 points.

FINAL SCORE: Port Adelaide 16.12 (108); Glenelg 13.15 (93)



Glenelg coach Graham Cornes.

Statistics show that Glenelg won more hit-outs (45 to 29), had more of the ball (306 disposals to 270) and were more often favoured by the umpires (22 frees to 16). However, many of Glenelg's possessions were achieved under intense pressure, resulting in wayward delivery, while

the Magpies - in quintessential Port style - were more direct, and used the ball to significantly greater effect.



Victorious Port mentor John Cahill.

The 1990 SANFL grand final was a game which, foreshadowing the Adelaide-Port Adelaide 'showdowns' of seasons to come, effectively divided the sport-loving population of the state: you were either a Port supporter, or you weren't; there was - and is - no middle ground.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of Port Adelaide's aborted attempt to gain access to Australian football's elite competition, the fall-out from the affair has fuelled and reinforced an ongoing sense of intense rivalry, of 'us and them', which is arguably the essence of good, meaningful, high quality competitive sport.

Coaches' Comments¹²⁶

Graham Cornes (Glenelg): *"The commitment and effort in the last quarter was what we wanted - the level in the previous three was not there at all.*

"If anyone was going to be waging a campaign out there today it should have been us.

"With the events of the past few months and the feeling of the other 9 clubs behind us, it should have motivated us sufficiently.

"In those 5 or 10 minutes of the game when it really counted, Port showed how it should have been done."

John Cahill (Port Adelaide): *"That was a great effort. There was a lot of pressure on us with injuries before and during the game.*

" We had some bad injuries during the game, which worried us because we were down to 16 fit men at half-time. Apart from the injuries to Johnston and Hodges, Ginever had concussion and Mahney had a bad hamstring. But they showed tremendous fighting qualities and that's what Port Adelaide is all about - the commitment of the players, courage and desperation. I thought they gave everything they could. Some of them were just running on memory at the finish.

"Hynes did a great job in ruck. He responds to responsibility and he just had it put on to him that he had to do it and I give him full credit. He paced himself for the full game and he did it well.

"At half time I thought Hodges was down and out but he's got a lot of courage and he just put a bandage on it (the knee) and went back on."

¹²⁶ Both coaches' comments were quoted in 'Football Times', volume 15 number 28, 11/10/90, page 12. Cornes' traditional post-match visit to the Port Adelaide changing rooms evoked a measure of controversy when he used the occasion as a vehicle for his frustrations, expressing sour grapes over the loss, and prompting several of the assembled Magpies to suggest, in somewhat colourful language, that he might feel happier in different surroundings.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Pts
Port Adelaide	4.5	10.7	13.9	16.12	108
Glenelg	5.2	6.7	9.11	13.15	93

BEST - Port Adelaide: Hynes, M.Williams, Phillips, Fiacchi, Tregenza, Hodges **Glenelg:** Seeböhm, Jameson, Bartlett, Fidge, Marshall, Gibbs

GOALS - Port Adelaide: Hodges 6; Settre 3; D.Smith, Wanganeen 2; Mahney, M.Williams, S.Williams **Glenelg:** Fidge 5; Murphy 3; Christie, Jameson, Liptak, Marshall, Salisbury

JACK OATEY MEDAL (best on ground): George Fiacchi (Port Adelaide)

ATTENDANCE: 50,589 at Football Park

SOUTH PARK

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

Royal Park was granted senior status in the SAFA in 1882, but its involvement in the competition was both ignominious and brief as, after finishing last of six clubs, it disappeared without trace.

SOUTH ADELAIDE

Club Address: 1 Lovelock Drive, Noarlunga Downs, South Australia 5158

Website: www.saafc.com.au

Home Ground: Alan Hickinbotham Oval (originally known as Noarlunga Oval)

Formed: 1876

Colours: Navy blue and white

Emblem: Panthers

Senior Grade Premierships: 1877, 1885, 1892-93, 1895-96, 1898-99, 1935, 1938, 1964 (11 total)

Other Premierships: NFL Series 1978-79 (2 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1984, 1986, 1991 (3 total)

Magarey Medallists: F.Barry 1915; D.Moriarty 1919, 1920 & 1921; J.Cockburn 1935; J.Deane 1953 & 1957*; M.Naley 1991; A.Osborn 1998; J.Cross 2012 (7 Medallists/10 Medals)

All Australians: Peter Darley 1969; Mark Naley 1986 (2 total)

League Top Goalkickers: R.Wardrop (14) 1882; H.Hill (19) 1885; A.Bushby (25) 1887; J.Kay (25) 1896, (35) 1898 & (28) 1902; S.Scott (54) 1945; D.Del-Re (95) 1995; M.Wundke (67) 2011 & (52) 2013 (10 total)

Highest Score: 39.16 (250) vs. Woodville 19.14 (128) at Football Park in round 14 1984

Most Games: 337 by Stuart Palmer from 1969 to 1985

Record Home Attendance: 1. Adelaide Oval - 30,618 in round 2 1965: South Adelaide 14.9 (93); Port Adelaide 9.8 (62); 2. Noarlunga Oval - 10,123 in round 8 1995: Glenelg 16.15 (111); South Adelaide 8.16 (64)

Record Finals Attendance: 56,353 for the 1964 grand final at Adelaide Oval: South Adelaide 9.15 (69); Port Adelaide 5.12 (42)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by the SANFL in 1998*

The advent of the Adelaide Crows in 1991 was arguably the single most momentous event in the history of football in South Australia. While the impact of two world wars may arguably have been more damaging in the short term, ultimately their effects were transitory. The emergence of the Crows, however, would change the face of South Australian football forever.

For the member clubs of the SANFL the most obvious change was in terms of their profile: no longer were they the primary shaping force of football in the state. In a sense, where once the SANFL had been cast in the role of protagonist, now it was very much a member of the supporting cast. What this has tended to mean in practical terms is that, for aspiring footballers of the highest order, the SANFL is now perceived as being merely a means to an end - that end being, hopefully, participation in the AFL. Previously, until perhaps as late as the mid-1980s, each of the three major state Leagues in Australia - VFL, SANFL and WAFL - were perceived as conferring 'league status' on the footballers who played in them, albeit with the tacit acknowledgement that, in terms of all round quality and importance, the VFL tended to be superior.¹²⁷ As more and more top South Australians and West Australians joined Victorian clubs, so the standard of football being played in Adelaide and Perth declined, a development which was accelerated, particularly in the west, by the admission to the VFL in 1987 of the Perth-based club West Coast. For a time, South Australia strenuously resisted following in Western Australia's

¹²⁷ The widely maintained assumption that the VFL (and, prior to that, the VFA) was always and inevitably superior is, of course, impossible to substantiate or refute. However, there have almost certainly been times when, irrespective of the overall strength of the competitions in which they participated, the strongest club(s) in the country have not been based in Victoria. Examples might include the Norwood team of the late 1880s, West Perth, Fremantle and Imperials in the mid to late 1890s when substantial numbers of the finest footballers in the land gravitated west, Port Adelaide's great pre-world war one combination, the Phil Matson-coached East Perth teams of the immediate post-first world war period, and South Fremantle's 1947-54 sides.

footsteps, but a series of dramatic developments in 1990 led to the formation of the Adelaide Crows and their admission the following year to what, by that stage, was referred to as the AFL.

Virtually overnight, the clubs which comprised the SANFL were faced with a radically different ball game, one which necessitated an immediate and thorough re-evaluation of their strategies, objectives and fundamental orientation. Put simply, the 'understudy-protagonist' relationship mentioned earlier was now very firmly in place, a state of affairs rendered all the more inviolable by the AFL's increasingly aggressive marketing of itself as the only competition that really mattered, both currently and, in its alleged former guise as the VFL, historically.¹²⁸ The gross distortion of the game's heritage which such a point of view represented was more or less lost on the emerging generation of South Australian football fans, many of whom, by avidly and uncritically lapping up the AFL's misrepresentations, lent to them a spurious credence.

In contrast to this, the previous generation of South Australian football aficionados, nurtured on the rich milk of a vibrantly intoxicating local competition that enjoyed near saturation media coverage, could perhaps be excused for sometimes feeling both bewildered and alienated. Even some of the players were perplexed. As South Adelaide veteran David Stoeckel explained when refuting a journalist's suggestion that, despite having enjoyed a prolific SANFL career with the Panthers, he must surely harbour some regrets over not having played football at 'the highest level': "My ambition had always been to play in the SANFL because

¹²⁸ The word 'alleged' is carefully chosen. The retrospective superimposing of 'AFL' over 'VFL' when delineating the game's records since 1897, quite aside from being fundamentally inaccurate, is also self-defeating in that it significantly diminishes the scope, richness and diversity of a sport which, for more than a century, has been an integral feature of the social, economic and cultural infrastructure of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and parts of New South Wales and Queensland, not merely the Melbourne-Geelong axis.

as a kid that was the only competition you really cared about".¹²⁹

It should not be inferred from this that the formation of the Adelaide Crows was in every way inimical to the well-being of clubs in the local competition; in certain ways, quite the opposite was true. During 1991 the Crows developed into a much hyped and highly profitable organisation, and a substantial proportion of the profits made were siphoned back to the SANFL clubs, which, in a sense, 'owned' the Crows. Less tangibly, the Crows raised awareness of and support for the sport of Australian football, even if at times it appeared that the average Crows supporter was more interested in side issues - like evaluating and comparing various players' physical attributes, or 'putting one over the Vics' - than the attractions of football per se. While it could be argued that football could not afford to turn up its nose at any supporters, however inexpert, there was also an opportunity here, which the SANFL very quickly grasped and began to exploit, to appeal to the hard core, old fashioned type of football supporter for whom the game was closer to a way of life than a recreation. A call for a return to 'grass roots football' was, in essence, an appeal to the purist, and the SANFL lost no time in adopting such a call as a major feature of its marketing strategy as it endeavoured to minimise the inevitable erosion of its local support base.

Essentially, the SANFL - and its constituent clubs - appealed to two things: first, people's senses of nostalgia - evoking that halcyon if slightly indeterminate era when a trip to the footy was a thing of rugs and thermoses and kicks with Dad on the oval at half time; and secondly people's egos, by means of the implicit notion that grassroots football supporters were the holders of the 'true faith', in marked contrast, for example, to the johnny-come-latelies who had indiscriminately flung themselves onto the Crows bandwagon.

As far as the individual SANFL clubs were concerned, such a change of emphasis almost necessitated a kind of re-

¹²⁹ 'SANFL Football Budget', 6/7/96, page 6.

invention process, and no club has been more proactive in re-inventing itself in recent years than South Adelaide. Most obviously of all, in 1995, after many years of indecision, the club finally re-located to Noarlunga, which since the 1970s had been the heart of its metropolitan zone. The aim here was simple: to become a readily identifiable and integral component of the local community - a standard bearer if you like - something to which its years of playing home matches at the Adelaide Oval in central Adelaide had been signally and singularly inimical. There is still much work to be done, but it is at least arguable that the club is in as potentially strong a position as for over a half a century; the challenge now, needless to say, is to transform 'potential' into achievement.

The distinction between traditional, 'grassroots', suburban football and its modern, Americanised, 'chardonnay set' alternative became slightly blurred with the admission to the AFL of a second South Australian team, Port Adelaide, in 1997. However, although the Power tended to attract a more 'traditional' following than the Crows, they could not realistically be regarded as a suburban or community oriented club per se; in the Adelaide metropolitan area, quintessential 'community football' was now the undisputed province of the SANFL, and in particular its nine local manifestations, the clubs.

From South Adelaide's perspective, the fact that it was now being more or less compelled to seek salvation through community involvement and interaction was ironic in the extreme, as we shall see.

First though, we need to travel back more than a hundred years, to a time when football in Adelaide was still struggling to decide on an identity for itself. In 1875, the Adelaide Football Club, the oldest in South Australia, had become so disorganised that a group of its members decided to secede and establish a new club, bearing the name South Adelaide. The situation rapidly became confused when, in April the following year, another group of disaffected Adelaide Football Club members held a meeting at the Draper

Memorial Schoolroom and decided to form a second breakaway club - also called South Adelaide.



South Adelaide Football Club in 1879.

Within a few days, common sense prevailed and, following a meeting of its members at the Havelock, the 1875 club voted unanimously to merge with its recently established namesake. Proudly espousing the motto 'unity is strength', South Australia's second oldest surviving football club, after Port Adelaide, had been born, and over the course of the next twelve months or so it would play a highly significant, but surprisingly little feted, role in helping create an enduring identity for football both in Adelaide, and in the colony as a whole.

Arguably the key figure in shaping that identity was a certain Charles Cameron Kingston, a colourful personality who would go on to become one of the leading public figures in South Australia of the nineteenth century. In 1876, however, he was the inaugural secretary, and some time player, of the newly formed South Adelaide Football Club, and his mission - if that is not too strong a term - was to see to it

that South Australia adopted the Victorian version of football, in which throwing the ball was prohibited, a player running with the ball had to bounce it "every ten yards or so", and marking was allowed irrespective of whether or not the marking player's feet were rooted to the ground at the moment he caught the ball. When the South Australian Football Association - the oldest organising body in Australian football - was established in 1877, Kingston's persuasiveness (and, one can not help but imagine, his eloquence) ultimately ensured that the rules of play adopted were more or less identical to those in operation at the time in Melbourne. Had Kingston not been around it is just conceivable that generations of South Australians would have grown up culturally and athletically diminished, forced to endure scrums, mauls and line-outs rather than - as the divine will surely intended - boundary throw-ins, ball ups and the perpetually fluctuating enigma of the holding the ball/holding the man rule.

Given Kingston's seminal role in shaping the Association it was perhaps only fitting that his club should carry off the inaugural premiership. Indeed, for the remainder of the century South would vie for SAFA pre-eminence with Norwood and, to a lesser extent, Port Adelaide, as the following chart shows:

Leading SAFA Clubs 1877 to 1900

Number of times finishing:

Club	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Norwood	11	7	4	1	-	-	-
South Adelaide	8	7	5	4	-	-	-
Port Adelaide	3	8	7	2	2	2	-
Adelaide	1	-	4	1	6	-	1

Mind you, as early as 1879 the club's entire future had been placed in jeopardy amidst allegations that certain of its players were persistently and deliberately overstepping the mark in terms of on-field aggression. During a match

between South and Norwood a major conflagration arose in which the principal protagonists were Osborn, the Redlegs' skipper, and South's Curtis. Afterwards, most of the blame was directed at Curtis, and there were even calls to disqualify not just the player, but his entire club, from the Association. Fortunately for South, the Association seemed a little non-plussed over how best to handle the situation, and the matter eventually petered out. However, later in the season after South had featured in another extraordinarily acrimonious match, this time against South Park, the SAFA stamped its authority by decreeing that, for the remainder of the year, any team scheduled to meet South Adelaide could, if it wished, decline to participate without forfeiting the match, which would effectively be declared drawn. No fewer than five of South's last six opponents for the 1879 season availed themselves of this dispensation and, as a result, effectively gift-wrapped the premiership and handed it to Norwood.

Although the 1880s yielded only one premiership - in 1885 - the 'city club', as it was known, was recognised as being at the forefront of the game in Adelaide, a status it reinforced when, in 1884, it became one of the first South Australian sides to beat a visiting VFA club. South downed the powerful Melbourne team 4.11 to 3.9 on the Adelaide Oval, with behinds, although recorded, not actually counting towards a team's score. That same year, the club also ventured onto 'foreign fields' itself when two matches were played against a New South Wales representative side in Sydney. South won one of the games easily by 8 goals, but was fortunate to escape with a draw in the other.

Four years later, South Adelaide was one of twenty-five Australian football clubs to be given the honour of competing, under Australian rules, against the visiting British rugby team. The tourists were not entirely inept at the 'foreign' code, winning 5 of the 18 matches contested, and indeed some of them were highly enthusiastic about the game, professing to prefer it to rugby. The game against South Adelaide was hotly contested, with South winning 8.9 to 5.9 (once again with behinds not counting).

Another noteworthy encounter during the club's early years came in 1892 when it held the mighty Carlton to a draw on the MCG. Indeed, had behinds been counted in the score at this time South would have won.



Jack Kay, who had two separate stints with South during the 1890s and early 1900s, and who is known to have topped the club's goal kicking list on at least three occasions. (Such records were not assiduously maintained until after the first world war.)

The 1890s was South's halcyon decade. Captained by Jack 'Dinnie' Reedman, one of the club's, and South Australia's, all-time great players, as well as "a fine tactician",¹³⁰ the blue and whites adopted a system that repeatedly left its rivals foundering. (For example, Reedman allegedly came up with a method for creating and then exploiting the loose man, an idea which, in some ways, could be regarded as the cornerstone of the modern game.) South also boasted some of the era's most accomplished players, notably the extraordinarily versatile Alf Bushby who, allegedly, was "recognised as the finest player in South Australia of this period, and second only to A.J.Thurgood of Essendon, Victoria, as the champion footballer of Australia".¹³¹ Other

¹³⁰ *South Australian Football: The Past And The Present 1860-1965* edited by C.K.Knuckey, page 90. Bear in mind that, during this period in the game's evolution, the captain undertook many of the duties later associated with the role of team coach. In particular, the captain was responsible for supervising team training.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, page 89.

greats included the prolific goalsneak, Jack Kay; Ernie Jones and Clem Hill, both of whom achieved even greater fame as Test cricketers; and not forgetting Reedman himself, a formidable ruckman to rank with the best who enjoyed a record eleven seasons (1888-98) as club skipper.

After finishing 3rd in 1890 and 1891, the blue and whites were either premiers (6 times) or runners up (3 times) in each of the ensuing 9 seasons. In fact, they might be considered somewhat unlucky not to have procured seven premierships during this time: in 1897, the last season in South Australia in which behinds were not included in the score, they lost by a goal against Port Adelaide in what was effectively a premiership play off. And the scores? Port Adelaide 3.1; South Adelaide 2.14. Overall, however, there could be no doubt whatsoever that, for most of the 1890s, South Adelaide was South Australia's strongest team.

Despite this, compared to opponents like Norwood and Port Adelaide the club was not particularly well supported, and revenue was limited. While South enjoyed on field success, the potential seriousness of this state of affairs tended to be ignored or glossed over, but the time was coming when, as a result of forces outside its control, all the hard work that the committee had undertaken to assemble, and Reedman to nurture, a top quality team of perennially successful footballers would be undone.

In 1897 the SAFA voted to introduce an electorate system of player registration, whereby players would be required to play for the club in whose electoral district they resided. The system was loosely implemented that very year, but only on a voluntary basis. However, from 1899 it became compulsory and, over the longer term, the big loser was the South Adelaide Football Club.

Initially, however, although the club lost a large number of highly talented and experienced players, including the likes of 'Dinny' Reedman, Jack Kay, Ern Jones, and Edward MacKenzie, the overall impact was negligible, as there were also a number of significant gains. Principal among these was the arrival from Norwood of the leading

goalsneak in the colony, Anthony 'Bos' Daly, who promptly proceeded to help himself to 32 goals for the season as South procured the 1899 premiership courtesy of a 5.12 (42) to 2.2 (14) challenge final victory over Daly's former associates from the Parade. Unfortunately, however, in 1900 he was on the move again, this time to West Torrens, and although the blue and whites were still sufficiently strong to play off for the premiership (losing by 13 points to North Adelaide) the 'halcyon era' was very definitely over.

Over the course of the next decade, particularly after Sturt was admitted to the competition in 1901, the effects of the electorate system would truly begin to hit home. South Adelaide was the only club to vote against Sturt's admission - hardly surprising when you consider that the newcomers were to be allocated a major slice of South's territory, which would see them able to claim as many as a dozen former Blue and White players in their debut season.



Charles Cameron Kingston.

South Adelaide's zone was actually centered on east Adelaide, one of the few areas of the city where the population was not expanding; moreover, with limited finances at its disposal, the club did not have ready recourse to alternative methods of recruitment. (Sturt, for example, had a major beneficiary in the shape of John Frederick Dempsey, whose money was used as bait to lure large numbers of top quality players to Unley from interstate; these players, known as 'Dempsey's Immigrants', would effectively sow the seeds of the Blues' first ever premiership in 1915.) The situation rapidly became self-perpetuating, and would continue, with only fleeting interludes, for most of the remainder of the twentieth century.

This is not meant to suggest that the club took the situation lying down. Far from it, in fact: in 1908, for example, it joined West Adelaide in breaking new ground for the SANFL by appointing a paid coach in the shape of former player, Fred O'Brien, who was enticed back from Broken Hill with the by no means meagre offer for the time of 10 shillings a week. His efforts were unsuccessful, however, and the club continued to struggle.¹³²

Between 1906 and 1914, South failed to contest the major round, and its overall success rate was poorer than 25%, easily the lowest in the competition during that period. Despite this, the club continued to be home to many fine players. Among the most notable of these were:

- Jack Tredrea, a ruggedly indefatigable and resolute performer, who freely - and somewhat colourfully - admitted to putting "plenty of ginger into my play because I do not believe in making a parlour game of the great Australian pastime"¹³³

¹³² *The South Australian Football Story* by Bernard Whimpress, page 153. By contrast, the man appointed by West Adelaide was former South great 'Dinny' Reedman, who promptly steered the red and blacks to the longest period of sustained success in the club's history.

¹³³ Quoted on the South Adelaide Football Club official website, at www.saflc.com.au, retrieved July 2011.

- George Wallace, a champion left footed rover who joined South from West Adelaide in 1905, and went on to give the club many years of sterling service, besides playing for South Australia on numerous occasions
- Alexander Job, a clever wingman who represented South Australia when it won the 1911 Adelaide Carnival
- Frank 'Dinky' Barry, a fleet of foot rover "who was sometimes accused of running too far with the ball",¹³⁴ but who nevertheless was recognised as one of the finest players of his era, winning the Magarey Medal in 1915

In 1915, South Adelaide at last began to give signs of emerging from the doldrums when it won 8 and drew 1 of its 12 minor round matches to qualify for the finals in 2nd place, a game behind Port Adelaide. Lack of finals experience told in the semi final clash with Sturt, however, and the Blues, thanks to straighter kicking for goal, won by 24 points to end South's season. With the war then intervening to bring organised, top level football to a halt, it is tempting to imagine that the club's most realistic opportunity of securing a flag since the turn of the century had gone.

When full scale football resumed in 1919, a newcomer to the South Adelaide ranks was soon eliciting fulsome praise:

The cleanest of players, he reminds me very much of Dave Low, that man of men, who always went for the ball, never intentionally interfering with his opponent. It is in this that a footballer shows his strength. If he cannot beat his man fair and square, what need is there to risk giving a free? Dan Moriarty gives

¹³⁴SA Greats: The History Of The Magarey Medal by John Wood, page 75.

*great promise of being one of the greatest footballers of modern times.*¹³⁵

The writer showed uncanny prescience, for in winning successive Magarey Medals in 1919, 1920 and 1921, Moriarty established a record that is unlikely ever to be equalled. Not that his greatness was merely a matter of records, statistics and inscriptions on the club honour board; his play was of such incomparable quality that it made you sit up and take notice whoever you were, and whatever your football background. For example, renowned Western Australian football historian Dolph Heinrichs, in reviewing the 1921 Perth Carnival, wrote:

*If South Australia could only run an honourable third in a small select field, it could claim, I believe, the finest player of them all. I refer to Dan Moriarty, who on his form against Victoria and WA, was one of the greatest half backs who ever played on a West Australian football field.*¹³⁶

Several decades later, former Sturt and South Australian great Victor York Richardson recalled:

*It may not be considered good football nowadays, but I remember an interstate game between Victoria and South Australia in which either Dan Moriarty or Wells Eicke four or five times in succession took spectacular finger-tip marks at half back and kicked far down the ground, only to see the other of them return the ball practically to the position from which it had been kicked. Good football by today's standards or not, it had the vast crowd roaring with delight at the sheer brilliance of each individual effort by these counterparts in each team.*¹³⁷

¹³⁵ From 'The Sport' newspaper, and quoted by John Wood in an article in *The South Adelaide Football Club 1990 Yearbook*, page 23.

¹³⁶ *Celebrating 100 Years of Tradition* by Jack Lee, page 104.

¹³⁷ *The Vic Richardson Story* by V.Y. Richardson, page 170.

Unfortunately for South Adelaide, Dan Moriarty's football career was only brief, and although his presence in the side was not quite sufficient to propel the side to a premiership, or even indeed to a grand final, things would get a lot worse after his retirement. During Moriarty's seven years at South the club contested the finals on three occasions, with 3rd place in 1921 and 1923 its best return; following his departure, it would not participate in the major round for a decade, and finished dead set last no fewer than six times; moreover, during that period, every one of the other seven SANFL clubs won at least one premiership.



Anthony "Bos" Daly.

At the root of South's problems was the league's inequitable zoning system which allocated the club "only 1.5

per cent of the area allotted to football clubs and 6.5 per cent of the population of the metropolitan area; half the quota required assuming an equitable distribution among eight league clubs".¹³⁸ When, in 1929, South's concerns on this matter were endorsed by a special Boundaries Commission to which both the SANFL chairman and vice-chairman were party, the club must surely have felt that it was at last on the verge of achieving parity with the other teams in the competition. However, the full league committee rejected the Boundary Commission's proposals, and South was back where it started.

Despite the team's collective inferiority to most of its opponents, South Adelaide continued to attract a fair number of exceptional players. During the early '20s, besides Moriarty, there was rugged, straight ahead half back 'Jim' Handby, who later played for Glenelg where he won the 1928 Magarey Medal; Boulder City-born and Broken Hill-raised Wally Allen, "Australia's champion wingster";¹³⁹ prolific goal kicker and captain Steve McKee, who was also a fine weight lifter, and who went on to become a sporting journalist of note; the formidable A.J. 'Bulla' Ryan, always in the thick of the action, and who almost invariably dominated his key position, both for club and state, despite being only 175cm tall; and brilliant rover Jack Daly, son of former Norwood and West Adelaide champion 'Bunny' Daly. Later on the club was blessed with the talents of Frank Tully, a fast, courageous rover who established a record by playing 168 consecutive league games; two outstanding wingmen in Jack Mackay and Laurie Cahill; arguably the club's greatest ever full forward in the shape of C.C. 'Dinny' Munro, who booted a total of 393 goals in eight seasons; and sublimely talented half forward

¹³⁸ Whimpress, op cit., page 154.

¹³⁹ This claim, made in an article in 'the SA Footballer' of 30/6/23, page 33, appears not to have been without justification, for "after having decisively beaten Garden (presumably Jack, Essendon wingman of the early 1920s) in the interstate match in Melbourne, capable Victorian critics hailed him as the champion of the year. This exalted opinion was supplemented by those who witnessed the two Carnival matches in WA in 1921".

flank specialist, Max Murdy, who was unlucky enough to finish 2nd in the Magarey Medal on no fewer than three occasions. Perhaps the club's finest player of the 1930s, however, was the 'human horse stinger', Jack Cockburn. Recruited from Blyth in 1934, when already twenty-four years of age, Cockburn won the Magarey Medal the following year, and in that season's 1st semi final issue of 'the SANFL Football Budget' was afforded the following eloquent tribute by 'Corinthian':

*Although of particularly robust physique, Cockburn has compelled admiration by the transparent fairness of his methods, and his concentration on the ball. What an easy task our umpires would be set if every player emulated Cockburn's style! The ball is invariably his objective, and his brilliance in gaining possession by dashing groundwork, and brilliant high flying, has made him the outstanding player of the season.*¹⁴⁰



Alf "Bulla" Ryan.

¹⁴⁰ 'SANFL Football Budget', 14/9/35, page 3.

After the team finished bottom in 1934 with just 4 wins from 17 matches, South's committee embarked on a determined, Australia-wide recruiting campaign that was ultimately to bear spectacular fruit in season 1935. Under new coach Vic Johnson, a burly former Port Adelaide ruckman, the blue and whites gave no indication of what lay ahead when they lost their opening round fixture at home to Norwood by 47 points. The following week, South travelled to Prospect and received a 23.5 (143) to 12.10 (82) hiding from North Adelaide, at which point the club's supporters must surely have sighed with resignation, muttering "here we go again". In round 3, however, South scored a hard fought 26 point victory against West Torrens, a team which had made the four the previous year, and over the following weeks it became clear that, under Johnson's fervent tutelage, the team was playing with greater tenacity, cohesion and purpose than for many a year. The level of improvement was vividly demonstrated in round 8 when the team travelled to the Parade for the return meeting with ladder leaders Norwood and emerged with an astonishing 21.17 (143) to 8.7 (55) victory. By this stage, all thought of consecutive wooden spoons had been well and truly dispensed with; the conversation among the club's supporters was now focused on the finals, and even - dare they hope? - the premiership.

South's flag-winning credentials went up a further notch after a 15.12 (102) to 11.13 (79) defeat of Port Adelaide at Adelaide in round 13. Prior to the game, most of the 'smart money' was on the Magpies for the premiership; afterwards, the blue and whites had achieved the status of 'danger team', not least down Alberton way, where nothing is ever taken for granted.

South duly qualified for the 1935 major round in 2nd position with an 11-6 win/loss record. It was the club's best minor round performance since 1915, and the first time the club had reached the finals since 1923. Perhaps not surprisingly therefore, in the 2nd semi final clash with Port Adelaide many of the players on whom the team had come to rely during the course of the season suddenly forgot how to

play; the Magpies won 17.17 (119) to 10.13 (63), comprehensively recapturing the favouritism of most of the pundits in the process. Indeed, there were some who now felt that Sturt, impressive winners over Norwood in the 1st semi final, had supplanted South as the major challengers to Port's supremacy.



Jack Cockburn, "the human horse-stinger".

In a tough, slogging preliminary final, the blue and whites reasserted themselves, if not quite convincingly, then at least with enough fortitude to see off the Double Blues. A key to South's victory was the display of Jack Cockburn. Barely sighted in the centre against Port Adelaide, Cockburn

was shifted to centre half back for the clash with Sturt, and proved virtually impassable all match. In winning 13.15 (93) to 11.13 (69) the blue and whites had qualified for the grand final for the first time since 1903 but, Cockburn's display apart, there had been little in their performance to suggest they could overturn the Magpies.

A major part of football's allure is its unpredictability, however. When the South players ran out for the grand final in front of 26,496 spectators, Johnson had them bursting with ambition and resolve. They needed to be. In a fearsome arm wrestle of a game, the underdogs held sway until three quarter time, and then:

*In the last quarter Port attacked relentlessly and with three minutes to go trailed by only two points. From the bounce South swept into attack and following a succession of flashing passes Munro took a well-judged mark over West to score a goal. The ball had barely bounced when the bell rang.*¹⁴¹

South had broken the camel's back with a win that was full of grit, determination and no small amount of skill. Final scores were South Adelaide 15.9 (99) to Port Adelaide 13.13 (91).

The last SANFL team to enjoy a meteoric rise from obscurity to pre-eminence, Glenelg in 1934, had found the dizzying heights of newfound success asphyxiating, and plummeted straight back to earth with a thud (the Tigers finished last in 1935). The question many football supporters were asking now was whether South Adelaide could avoid the same fate.

South made a solid start to the 1936 season to put its supporters' fears to rest, and although it was ultimately unable to repeat its 1935 success, it did at least manage to contest the finals for a second successive year, which in itself was a fairly noteworthy, indeed almost novel, achievement.

¹⁴¹ 'SANFL Football Budget', 2/10/82, page 55.

Unfortunately, 1st semi final opponents North Adelaide proved too strong, winning a high standard encounter by 28 points.

Under new coach 'Buck' Ashby the side showed marginal improvement in 1937. After winning 11 out of 17 minor round matches the blue and whites were placed 3rd on the premiership ladder going into the finals. South's 1st semi final opposition was provided by West Torrens, against whom victory had been procured in round 16 at Thebarton in somewhat unusual circumstances, South winning by 3 points (7.25 to 9.10) despite kicking 2 fewer goals. On 1st semi final day, the blue and whites' dominance was more accurately reflected on the scoreboard as they won with ease by 50 points, 15.13 (103) to 7.11 (53). The good form continued in the preliminary final when South overcame Norwood for the first time in the season, scoring 18.17 (125) to the Redlegs' 15.11 (101).



Max Murdy, three times a Magarey Medal runner-up.

The blue and whites' second grand final in three seasons once more pitted them against Port Adelaide, which was the reigning premier, and which had annihilated Norwood in the 2nd semi final by 63 points. Needless to say, this made the Magpies a raging hot favourite going into the big game, but South's excellent late season form helped attract an excellent crowd of 35,895, the biggest to witness a grand final since 1925. Sadly, South did not quite have Port's measure on this occasion, losing by 4 straight kicks, but there was always next year.

'Next year' was, from a blue and white perspective, sensational, and to an arguably unprecedented extent. South opened the season with scores of 25.24 (174) against West Adelaide, 31.15 (201) against Glenelg, and - most satisfyingly of all - 20.24 (144) against 1937 nemesis Port Adelaide. That was merely the hors d'oeuvres: during the remainder of the minor round, the side accumulated a record 2,244 points at an average of 132 per game en route to a 15-2 win/loss record and the club's first (and ultimately only) minor premiership of the 20th century. Likened to a machine owing to the systematic precision of much of its play,¹⁴² never before nor since has a South Adelaide team dominated the competition to the extent that it did in 1938. Former South champion Steve McKee, writing midway through the season in 'the SANFL Football Budget', expressed the opinion that the team, after initially seeming "well balanced at all points except at full back where lack of high marking strength theoretically exposed South to the danger of defeat" was now, following the move of former Glenelg player Jack Boyle to that position, pretty close to being 'the complete article'.¹⁴³

The accuracy of this assessment was emphatically demonstrated during the 1938 finals series when the blue and whites coasted to a 'straight sets' premiership courtesy of wins over Norwood (by 20 points in the 2nd semi final) and old rivals Port Adelaide (by 46 points in the grand final).

¹⁴² See 'SANFL Football Budget', 11/6/38, page 5.

¹⁴³ SANFL Football Budget', 30/7/38, page 5.

South's record-breaking season reached a record-breaking climax when it established a new grand final 'high' with a tally of 23.14 (152).



Laurie Cahill, one of South's - and the game's - greatest ever wingmen.

One week after the grand final South Adelaide met VFL premier Carlton in an unofficial championship of Australia match at the Wayville Showgrounds. Despite the

inappropriateness of the venue for such a prestigious match, the teams put on a captivating display that finished in the most dramatic circumstances. After trailing by 15 points at three quarter time, South fought back strongly in the last quarter, and when George Jobson marked within goal kicking range as the final bell went, only 6 points separated the sides. Unfortunately for South, however, Jobson's kick missed everything, leaving Carlton victorious 10.22 (82) to 10.16 (76).¹⁴⁴

Among the many noteworthy contributors to South's record-breaking season were Laurie Cahill, who won the club's best and fairest award, leading goalkicker Clem Rosewarne (82 goals), the Dawes brothers, Jim and club captain Jack, fleet-footed rover Len Lapthorne, "who never looked anything but a gleeful imp of mischief on the field",¹⁴⁵ the resolutely irrepressible Jack Cockburn, effervescent speedster Max Murdy, and the formidably powerful Keith Brown.

With all of these players except for Rosewarne still available in 1939 South was always going to be difficult to beat. Unfortunately, after a solid minor series which yielded 12 wins from 17 matches, good enough for 2nd position on the ladder, the side capitulated when it counted. Against Port Adelaide in the 2nd semi final, poor kicking for goal was partly responsible for a 19 point loss, but in the following week's preliminary final meeting with West Torrens the side underperformed dismally and was soundly beaten by almost 6 goals.

Still a force to be contended with in 1940, and widely recognised as the premier attacking force in the league, the blue and whites reached their fourth grand final in six seasons after solid finals victories over Norwood (by 31 points) and Port Adelaide (by 20 points). Sturt, however, justifiably won the premiership by 19 points in front of a meagre crowd of

¹⁴⁴ See *Champions Of Australia* by Max Sayer, page 22.

¹⁴⁵ *The Pash Papers: Australian Rules Football in South Australia 1950-1964* by Jeff Pash, page 38.

28,500, which emphasised the inimical impact that war was beginning to have both on football, and on the society which nurtured and spawned it.

Six consecutive finals appearances remains by some measure the club's most auspicious sequence since the inception of district football. Over the next two and a half decades, however, it would all too often seem, to supporters of long standing, like a dim, distant memory, or perhaps a dream.

Between 1942 and 1944 the SANFL conducted a restricted, four team competition in which South joined forces with Sturt, finishing 3rd, 4th and 3rd. On the resumption of full scale football in 1945 the club embarked on the most sustained period of under-achievement in its history. The bare statistics make dire reading: in the nineteen seasons from 1945 to 1963 the side's success rate was a paltry 19.5%; it finished bottom in an eight team competition no fewer than eleven times, 7th on six occasions, and 6th twice; in 1948 and 1950 it failed to win a single match, and never once managed to win as many games as it lost. The problem, at least in the view of the club's administration, centered on the inadequacy of its metropolitan recruiting zone, and although the committee tried desperately, and repeatedly, to duplicate its successful pre-war interstate and country recruitment strategies, other clubs were now increasingly doing the same, and by and large with more resources at their disposal, and hence greater success.

Lack of success notwithstanding, South Adelaide was often a happy club, boasting an active and vibrant social life. Football, after all, is essentially a game - or, if that no longer quite holds true in an era when the AFL's declared perception of itself is of being 'Australia's premier sporting brand name', then it was at least more nearly the case half a century ago.

At the end of a 1954 season which had seen the senior side win 5 out of 18 matches to finish 7th, an official club party comprising 26 players, 14 officials, 10 'A' Grade staff, and 3 'guests' embarked on a 12 day interstate tour which took in brief visits to Ballarat and Melbourne, and a

lengthy stay in Tasmania. During the tour, a match was played against 1954 TFL premier Hobart (which South won by 6 points), but the main objectives of the trip appear to have been rest, relaxation and sight-seeing - with a spot of gambling at the 1954 Caulfield Cup in Melbourne on the return journey thrown in for good measure.¹⁴⁶ Of course, such journeys are commonplace nowadays, but in the 1950s they were still comparatively rare, and highlighted the fact that, although nothing like 'professional' in the strict sense of the word, to be a league footballer was often to enjoy benefits denied to the majority of the population at large.

The pick of South Adelaide's players during the 1950s was undoubtedly Jim Deane. A dual Magarey Medallist (including a retrospective award for the 1957 season, in which he initially lost to West Adelaide's Roy Benton on a countback), Deane also played successfully with Richmond in the VFL for two years. Despite being an almost totally one-sided player - far from unusual in those days - he "was so good it didn't really show - or matter".¹⁴⁷ Described by Jeff Pash as "elegant and effortless",¹⁴⁸ and by Merv Agars as "a tremendous competitor, a prodigious kick getter and a polished performer",¹⁴⁹ Deane deserves to be remembered as one of the game's all-time greats.

In 1959 the SANFL finally acceded to the club's repeated pleas to extend its metropolitan recruiting zone by granting it a substantial slice of the southern suburbs, meaning that for the first time it was possible for South to go about the task of forging a meaningful local identity for itself. Although it would take some time for the benefits of this to be properly felt, it needs to be born in mind as a significant underpinning factor to the eventual, albeit fleeting, success that the club enjoyed under Neil Kerley.

¹⁴⁶ Details are as per 'South Adelaide Football Club Tour of Tasmania October 6-17 1954: Official Programme and Itinerary'.

¹⁴⁷ Merv Agars writing in *League Football in South Australia* 1977, page 60.

¹⁴⁸ Pash, op cit., page 94.

¹⁴⁹ Agars, op cit., page 60.



South's "messiah", Neil Kerley.

To anyone reading between the lines, South Adelaide's latent pre-eminence was apparent even during the wooden spoon year of 1963, when the team won just 2 of its 20 games. On numerous occasions during the year, the side

did everything but win, prompting the 'Budget' writer to pose the question, "How well do you have to play before you can win more than one out of ten matches? Ask South that, and if they don't gnash their teeth they ought to".¹⁵⁰ During the first half of the season in particular, before disillusionment set in, South lost many games that could realistically be classed as 'winnable', suggesting that the problem was not one of lack of talent, but rather of inadequate application of talent. All the elements of a good orchestra were there; what was needed now was an expert conductor, and throughout the 1963 season South was determinedly courting the man they had in mind.

That man was Donald Neil Kerley, who in 1961, as playing coach, had been responsible for steering West Adelaide to what its supporters, and many neutral observers, regarded as a long overdue premiership. The following year he had failed by just 3 points to repeat the achievement, and to the astonishment of many had been dumped as West coach in favour of Doug Thomas. Although he carried on with the club as a player in 1963, the South committee sensed - rightly, as it turned out - that here was a plant ripe for the picking.

Initially - and, given South Adelaide's playing record over the previous twenty years, understandably - sceptical, Kerley was ultimately won over largely through the persistence of South's president, Clem Croft, who, along with several of his fellow committee members, visited him on numerous occasions, and basically would not take 'no' for an answer.¹⁵¹ When Kerley finally accepted their invitation to coach South it was with eyes wide open as to the reality and scale of the task confronting him. That the team possessed talent was undoubted, but it needed to be fitter, he realised, and it needed to be much more focused. Consequently, he put the players through the most gruelling pre-season training

¹⁵⁰ 'SANFL Football Budget', 29/6/63, page 12.

¹⁵¹ See *Knuckles: The Neil Kerley Story* by Jim Rosevear, pages 80-83, for a more detailed account of the circumstances surrounding Kerley's recruitment by South.

regime any of them had experienced in preparation for the opening game of the season which, as chance would have it, was at home to Kerley's former club, West Adelaide.

Kerley himself had not yet been cleared to play, but he received a tumultuous ovation from the crowd as he made his way to the coaching dug-out prior to the start of the game; clearly, most members of the public were firmly on his side over his sacking debacle with West. Much more importantly though, as far as Kerley was concerned, his team did him proud, putting in a solid, tenacious and cohesive all round four quarter effort to comprehensively vanquish the Blood 'n Tars by 36 points. Already, it was obvious that the maestro had made a significant difference to his team which, mirroring its new found tenacity, had now adopted the Panther as its emblem.

Keenly aware that Port Adelaide was the benchmark against which all other SANFL clubs were currently measured, Kerley would no doubt have derived at least a glimmer of satisfaction from the front page article in 'the SANFL Football Budget' for 30th May 1964, the week after South had scored a notable upset win over the Magpies. Under the heading 'South took Port on at own game', the writer observed:

*South proved a point against Port last week. They took the Magpies on at their own game and beat them..... (The) victory proved many things. One is that Neil Kerley has coached them on the right lines, and has them very fit. Secondly, they now have the will-to-win. Very few teams have come back to win after Port have run to a 16 points lead in the third quarter. South did. Courage and will-to-win have won Port many League matches. Repeat that for South now, and there is the complete picture.*¹⁵²

The win over Port saw the Panthers sitting proudly at the head of the premiership ladder, with 6 wins and just 1

¹⁵² 'SANFL Football Budget', 30/5/64.

defeat, and thereafter there was no question of letting up. By the end of round 20 the side had qualified for its first post-war finals series in 2nd place with a 17-3 win/loss record, equal on points with minor premier Port Adelaide.



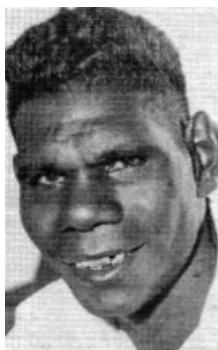
Half back flanker par excellence, Bob Schmidt.

South supporters were presumably having to pinch themselves prior to the 2nd semi final in which 38,918 spectators were treated to a bona fide classic, in which Port, having trailed by 32 points at the last change, snatched victory at the death by a single point. Uncharacteristically, Kerley had opted to go on the defensive during the final term, a decision he ruefully regretted, and vowed never to repeat. However, given that it was the Panthers' first finals outing there was little real reason to feel discouraged, and when Sturt was comprehensively outplayed to the tune of 39 points in the following week's preliminary final the scene was set for a titanic, quintessential 'David vs. Goliath' premierships decider.

Of the South Adelaide team which took the field in front of 56,353 spectators on grand final day, only Neil Kerley, Lester Ross (ex-Norwood) and Ian Day (ex-West Adelaide) had played in a grand final before. Aware of this, 'the King'

had kept everything low key in the build up to the big game, and right from the early moments of the opening term it was clear that the players were not about to let their coach down. As usual, Port's tackling was ferocious, but the Panthers gave as good as they got, and in half forward Alf Skuse (10 kicks in the 1st quarter), rovers Ian Day and Alan White, strong marking ruckman David Kantilla, and elusive centreman Lindsay Backman they had the dominant players on view. The South rucks were on top early too, although later this would change. By quarter time, the Panthers had kicked the only 2 goals of the game and were 12 points to the good - still anybody's match, but a sound start.

The Magpies began the 2nd term well but were prevented from capitalising on their superiority by a bustling, hyper aggressive South Adelaide defence. The Panthers, who had hardly managed to get the ball ahead of centre all term, led 2.6 to 0.8 as time-on approached before hitting Port with not one, not two, but three massive body blows in the shape of goals to White, Day and Dick Jackson to go into the main break with a handy looking 26 point advantage. At half time, astonishingly, the reigning premiers and flag favourites had yet to kick a goal.



David "Soapy" Kantilla, best afield in South's 1964 grand final triumph over Port Adelaide.

South added to the Magpies' misery early in the 3rd term thanks to another goal from White, and although Eric Freeman finally managed to register a major for Port at the 7 minute mark, White's 3rd goal moments later restored the Panthers' healthy lead. However, with Magpie coach Fos Williams ringing the changes, Port finished the quarter strongly, adding 3 goals to get within 16 points at the final change. The scene was set for a thrilling finale.

South did most of the attacking early in the final term but could only manage minor scores. Then, 7 minutes in, Eric Freeman goaled for Port to bring the margin back to 13 points, and the crowd to fever pitch. A lesser team would have buckled at this point, but the Panthers had graduated from the Neil Kerley School of Applied Fortitude and Resolve, and buckling was the last thing on their mind. A brilliant mark to Skuse, followed by a goal, extended the difference to 19 points, and shortly afterwards wingman Brian Ploenges found Ian Day in the clear, and the future television commentator gleefully put the seal on a great win. South had taken everything the 'mighty Magpies' had thrown at them, and triumphed.

On a day when "Every man in the South side pulled his weight - and a little bit more"¹⁵³ selecting best players is perhaps a tad inappropriate. However, most media observers gave David Kantilla (18 kicks and 10 marks) the nod as best afield, closely followed by Alf Skuse, Lindsay Backman and Ian Day, all of whom had well in excess of 20 possessions.

Statistical summaries of the game show that South had quite a few more kicks and many more handpasses than Port, although the Magpies, particularly after the 1st quarter, dominated in the air. What statistics cannot show, however, is the amount of passion, desire and pure old fashioned 'G and D' generated by the men in navy and white, as a result of which a twenty-six year premierships drought had been

¹⁵³ From Neil Kerley's speech at the club's victory dinner at the Victoria Hotel, quoted in Rosevear, op cit., page 88.

eradicated, and the beleaguered optimism of the club's loyal and long-suffering supporters rekindled.

Five days after the grand final, South, without four members of its premiership team, took on VFL premier Melbourne at Norwood Oval in an unofficial championship match. The Demons had enjoyed a break of nineteen days since their grand final, and were much fresher, coming back from 12 points down at the last change to win by 11 points. Melbourne coach Norm Smith was, as ever, a modest winner, indicating "that he thought South was slightly the better side on the night, had more of the play, and was one of the fastest sides he had seen".¹⁵⁴

The 1965 season proved to be one of missed opportunity for South, and the fact that the team's eventual 3rd position on the ladder was a source of genuine disappointment to the club's supporters shows just how much progress had been made in such a short space of time. However, it might all have been so different had the Panthers not succumbed, in the most controversial of circumstances, by a solitary point to Port Adelaide in the 2nd semi final. After trailing by 30 points during the 3rd quarter South came storming back to hit the front by 5 points with just a couple of minutes left on the clock. Then:

- Kerley on the half back line steered a kick in the direction of Skuse, only to see Port defender Elix run in and intercept.
- Elix's kick was gathered, on the bounce, by Mead, some 45 metres from Port's goal, whereupon he was promptly and resolutely claimed by Schmidt. Predictable cries of "Ball!" and "Holding the man!" went up, with umpire Cunningham, bravely and controversially, agreeing with the latter.
- Hordes of spectators spilled over the fence and onto the ground; within seconds, the Port Adelaide goal

¹⁵⁴ *Champions Of Australia* by Max Sayer, page 26.

square was swarming with bodies, only a few of which belonged to footballers.

- Mead's kick for goal, a flat punt, was straight but low; had any of the South defenders been able to take a running leap at it, they might well have been able to intercept it, but as it was there was no room for them to maneuver.
- The ball tumbled through for a goal. Port Adelaide was home by a point!

After the trauma and tension of such a finish, it is perhaps scarcely surprising that the Panthers hit the track for the following week's preliminary final against Sturt a trifle flat. As ever under Kerley, their endeavour and commitment could not be faulted, but such qualities alone were insufficient against the emerging power of Jack Oatey's Double Blues, who eased home by 7 points. If there is any truth to the theory that every club has at least one season which deserves to be called 'the one that got away', then this almost certainly was South's.

If the Panthers were undeniably unfortunate in 1965, the following year they let both themselves and their coach down badly when they meekly capitulated to North Adelaide at the 1st semi final stage. To make matters worse, Kerley and certain members of the South Adelaide committee were no longer quite seeing things eye to eye, with the committee allegedly interfering in things like team selection that Kerley felt were ultimately the province of the coach. At the end of the 1966 season, Kerley left for pastures new at Glenelg, bringing the curtain down on a brief, but noteworthy, period of success for South.

During Neil Kerley's three year stint as coach of the Panthers there is no doubt that they became, in some respects, the darlings of the media. Everyone loves a 'rags to riches' story, and with Kerls playing 'fairy godmother' to Port Adelaide's 'ugly sisters' that is precisely what South provided. The SANFL was enjoying a boom time in terms of attendances during the mid-1960s, and a major reason for

this was that South Adelaide had breathed new life into a competition which had tended to be dominated by Port Adelaide (8 flags in 10 years) for so long that people were becoming disillusioned and bored.



Peter Darley contests a hit-out against Port.

Neil Kerley's successor as coach, Peter Darley, was already a club stalwart who simultaneously happened to be one of the finest ruckmen in the game. Dubbed 'the jumbo Prince' because of his elegant way of dominating the ruck, Darley won no fewer than seven club best and fairest awards, achieved All Australian selection in 1969, and tied with Barrie Robran for the 1968 Magarey Medal, only to be ruled ineligible because of having incurred a suspension during the

season. Noted opponent John Nicholls recalled Darley as being "a good mark, a very strong kick" and "a very smart cookie as far as using his body in ruck work goes".¹⁵⁵ However, in three seasons as coach, despite being "an inspiring leader",¹⁵⁶ he failed to build on the foundations laid by Kerley, and indeed had to endure the discomfiting experience of seeing his charges slowly but steadily lose the plot entirely, finishing 5th in 1967, 6th in 1968, and 10th and last in 1969.

Things did not get much better under Jim Deane (1970-71) or Dave Darcy (1972-73-74) either. It was only after the appointment of Haydn Bunton junior as coach in 1975 that improvement, gradual at first, and then more marked, began to occur. By the late 1970s the 'little master' had the team producing football that was firmly rooted in the South tradition - blisteringly fast, cohesive and eye-catchingly skilful. It was a style of play ideally suited to night football, as the Panthers proved in winning the NFL night series in both 1978 and 1979.

In the former year, the competition involved club teams from South Australia (5), Western Australia (4), and the VFA (3), plus representative teams from Tasmania, the ACT, New South Wales and Queensland. After a 31 point opening round win over Port Adelaide, South scored wins over Sandringham by 59 points at Norwood, and Port Melbourne, after having to overcome "what might best be described as 'home town difficulties'",¹⁵⁷ by 5 points in Melbourne to set up a grand final meeting with Glenelg.

The Panthers approached the match, played at Norwood Oval, with as much seriousness as if it had been a day grand final, an approach that was ultimately completely vindicated as they overwhelmed the Tigers "with an aggression and determination that was almost frightening".¹⁵⁸ The match was strenuously fought for the first 3 quarters, with

¹⁵⁵ *Big Nick* by John Nicholls with Ian McDonald, page 179.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, page 179.

¹⁵⁷ 'SANFL Football Budget', 22/7/78, page 5.

¹⁵⁸ 'SANFL Football Budget', 29-30/7/78, page 27.

South having led narrowly at every change by 9, 8 and 14 points. During the last term, however, the Panthers played "their best football for the season",¹⁵⁹ adding 4.6 to 1.1 to win with consummate conviction by 37 points, 9.9 (63) to 3.8 (26). Geoff Baynes, John Schneebichler, Shane Butler, Stuart Palmer and Wayne Slattery were South's best.



Eddie Fry takes a powerful grab against Glenelg.

In 1979, the Panthers played off for two premierships, beating Norwood 7.9 (51) to 5.10 (40) at the culmination of a truncated NFL series, but succumbing by 31 points against Port Adelaide in the grand final of the competition that really

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., page 27.

mattered, the SANFL. In retrospect, however, perhaps the most important occurrence in 1979 from the South Adelaide Football Club's point of view was the decision of the SANFL to award the club the growing urban areas of Adelaide extending south to Noarlunga as part of its territory. For the first time since the inception of electorate football eighty years earlier, the club now had the opportunity to set down roots and establish a meaningful local identity.

Haydn Bunton's record eight year association with the club as senior coach ended after a disappointing 1982 season which saw the team plummet from 4th place in 1981 to 8th. Under his replacement, Graham Cornes, the Panthers returned to the finals action in 1983, but lost heavily to North Adelaide in the elimination final. In the club's Annual Report, Cornes identified three areas in which the team would need to show dramatic improvement if it was to mount a credible premiership challenge in 1984: 1. accuracy of disposal; 2. physical strength; and 3. speed of movement of the ball.¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, although South did manage one more minor round win in 1984 (13 as against 10), it was no match for eventual premier Norwood in the elimination final.

On the brighter side, during the Graham Cornes era the Panthers maintained their reputation for producing some of their best football at night, reaching the final of the Escort Cup in both 1983 (when they lost to West Torrens) and 1984 (when they scored a comprehensive victory over Sturt).

Cornes returned 'home' to Glenelg in 1985 and the Panthers endured a calamitous and much publicised start to the season under new coach, Don Scott, a former star ruckman with VFL side Hawthorn. South lost the opening 7 games of the season, and Scott was on his way, with ex Sturt star Rick Davies stepping into the breach with the unenviable task of trying to restore some respectability to the club. Over the remainder of the 1985 season, he actually succeeded to some extent in doing so: the Panthers won 8 of their

¹⁶⁰ See 'South Adelaide Football Club Inc. 107th Annual Report and Balance Sheet', page 10.

remaining 15 games to clamber to 8th place on the ladder. The team also made a promising start to the 1986 season when it won its second Escort Cup grand final in three years courtesy of an 11 point victory over Graham Cornes' Glenelg. However, this achievement merely flattered to deceive, as over the course of the next three seasons the club's performances went from bad to worse. In 1986 and 1987, under Davies, South finished 9th and 10th respectively, before enduring the ignominy of another wooden spoon under Davies' replacement, John Reid, in 1988. The following year brought marginal on field improvement, but much more worryingly the club now found itself confronted by financial difficulties of such magnitude that extinction was threatened. By May 1990 the situation had become so dire that, in what seemed like a last bid attempt to avoid having to close its doors for good, the club began actively to seek a merger arrangement.



Panther action from the 1990 elimination final defeat of Norwood, featuring David Kappler (left) and Darryl Heath (about to kick).

On 10 May 1990, under the headline 'South Adelaide Crisis: Counting the Cost', South Australia's only football newspaper, 'Football Times', reported:

*South Adelaide, one of SA's oldest football clubs, is in the throes of dying. With a debt of \$500,000, combined with an annual interest bill of close to \$100,000, the club is seeking a merger with another club.*¹⁶¹

Inside the publication, various writers speculated on possible merger partners (with Sturt appearing favourite), congratulated South on showing guts in facing reality, and delighted in blaming the SANFL for the crisis. However, in retrospect the most astute analysis of the situation came from Lance Campbell, who observed:

There is an irony in the South Adelaide saga. It is that for as long as the club exists, it has a better long term chance of survival than some others in the SANFL. In other words, South could live for another 100 years if it had another million dollars now. Yet that sum of money couldn't guarantee the futures of West Adelaide, West Torrens and Woodville. South has the player rights to the land where hundreds of thousands of the people of Adelaide will live in the decades to come. Already the club is beginning to groom young footballers from the other side of O'Halloran Hill, and reaping its rewards in the junior grades. Developers eye every spare hectare down there. It cannot be any other way than that the region will become even more densely populated in time. Torrens, West and Woodville, hemmed in by the sea and the city, have no such hopes.

So it's no wonder that the South faithful are now seeking the alternatives to the Sturt 'merger' dumped upon us as all but a fait accompli last week. Over one last hurdle, just one more jump - and South, with help, could be back in the pack containing the clubs

¹⁶¹'Football Times', 10/5/90, page 1.

*with the best chances of maintaining their individual identities - Central District, Port Adelaide, Glenelg and Norwood.*¹⁶²

Aided by some rousing on field performances, the 'Save South Adelaide' campaign achieved a memorable, some would say miraculous, success. By the end of the 1990 season all thoughts of a merger had been shelved, while the team's performance in recovering to make the finals after a poor start to the season had fans buoyant. Indeed, not only did the side reach the finals, once there it performed with considerable credit, riding the crest of a wave of popular sentimental support to crush Norwood by 42 points in the elimination final, and giving North Adelaide a scare early on in the 1st semi final before succumbing by 56 points.

The arrival of the Adelaide Crows on the scene in 1991 was something that the South Adelaide administration, spearheaded by president Ray Hendrie, a former player with the club, regarded positively,¹⁶³ and as was discussed earlier in this account there certainly proved to be aspects of South Australia's foray into the pseudo-national environment of the AFL that local club administrators were able to utilise to good effect. In South Adelaide's case, the move to Noarlunga Oval in 1995 was widely viewed, at the time, as, the most important single development in the club's history. As Central District have conclusively demonstrated in connection with Adelaide's northern suburbs, building a strong local identity, and forging meaningful community relationships, are perhaps the most crucial elements in achieving success at state league level in the modern game. So far, however, the Panthers have comprehensively failed to emulate their northern counterpart, qualifying for the finals only twice in the last nineteen seasons. However, the potential for South to impose themselves as a genuine SANFL power still undoubtedly

¹⁶² Ibid., page 5.

¹⁶³ In *The South Adelaide Football Club 1990 Yearbook*, page 14, Hendrie expresses optimism over the potential financial windfall which the fledgling AFL side would bring to the SANFL's constituent clubs, an optimism that ultimately proved - in the short term at any rate - well-founded.

exists, and indeed one could almost venture to suggest that, if the Era of the Panther does not arrive soon, the club will have only itself to blame. With half a century having passed since the Panthers last experienced premiership glory, the 2014 season, the club's twentieth at Noarlunga, would seem to represent a perfect opportunity to make the other nine teams in the SANFL to sit up and take notice of the southern suburbs' sleeping giant.

Blue and White Breakthrough

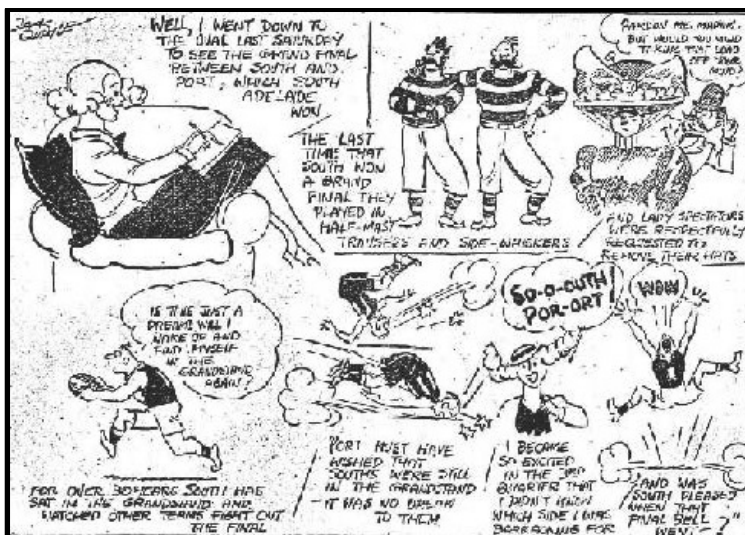
1935 SANFL Grand Final: South Adelaide vs. Port Adelaide

During the early 1920s South Adelaide showed flashes of promise without ever really giving the impression of being a genuine premiership threat. Between 1921 and 1923 the blue and whites contested every finals series, but only managed 1 win in 4 major round matches. The principal driving force behind the club's brief flirtation with prominence was centre half back Dan Moriarty, Magarey Medallist in his first three seasons of league football, 1919, 1920 and 1921. Moriarty remains the only footballer in history to have won a hat-trick of Magarey Medals. However, the start of his league career had been delayed by the Great War, and he was already 24 years of age when he made his senior grade debut for South. At the end of the 1925 season he retired, having played just 97 league games. By that time South had already embarked on one of the many prolonged periods of under-achievement to have blighted the club over the course of its long history. After failing to qualify for the 1924 finals only on percentage the blue and whites came nowhere near to procuring such qualification for another decade. In the ten seasons from 1925 to 1934 South finished 6th once, 7th three times, and 8th and last on the other half a dozen occasions.

The 1924 season was, in all outward respects, no different from the nine which had immediately preceded it. South managed just 4 wins from 17 matches for the year and ended up with the wooden spoon. However, dramatic changes were imminent. The fact that the blue and whites boasted players of genuine quality was indisputable. Robust, dashing half back flanker Jack Cockburn had been recruited from Blyth in 1934 and impressed sufficiently to claim the club's best and fairest award. Among the more noteworthy of his team mates were gutsy, diminutive rover Frank Tully, already a veteran by the time he was appointed club skipper in 1935, pacy, highly skilled rover or wingman Laurie Cahill, prolific goalsneak Chris "Diddy" Munro, and speedy, close-checking back pocket George Mulcahy. However, arguably the most important component in the 1935 blue and white jigsaw was inserted just prior to the season when former Port champion Vic Johnson was appointed as club coach. By instilling some trademark Magpie ferocity and determination into his charges Johnson enabled them to realise their undoubted potential, and set the club on the road to its greatest era of the twentieth century.

By contrast with the blue and whites, Johnson's former club Port Adelaide had enjoyed repeated success since the turn of the century, playing off for the premiership no fewer than 118 times, and emerging triumphant in 1903, 1906, 1910, 1913-14, 1921 and 1928. The Magpies most recent grand final appearance had been in 1934, when they had succumbed to a shock 9 point loss to Glenelg. With former West Torrens star Len Ashby in the coaching hotseat they were hungry to atone, and with players of the calibre of Jack Dermody, Alby Hollingworth, Ken Obst, Bob Quinn, Jack Prideaux and Alan "Bull" Reval they were well-equipped to do so.

The Magpies indeed set their stall out early in the 1935 season with convincing wins in the opening 3 rounds over West, Torrens and Glenelg. They went on to head the premiership ladder going into the finals after managing 12 victories from 17 games.



South began the 1935 season less spectacularly with a 47 point reversal at home to Norwood in round 1, followed by a 61 point defeat at the hands of North the following week, results which provided no hint whatsoever of what was to come. To all intents and purposes it appeared to be a case of "business as usual", but this impression was soon to be dispelled as rounds 2 to 4 produced wins against West Torrens, Glenelg and Sturt by margins of 26, 74 and 34 points. In the process South began exhibiting the free-scoring style which would become the team's forte over the ensuing half a dozen seasons. There would still be the odd hiccup, but at their best the blue and whites were genuinely impressive, and they ultimately qualified for the finals in 2nd place, just a win behind Port Adelaide. Many observers rated them a genuine premiership chance, but a somewhat meek 46 point capitulation to the Magpies in the 2nd semi final produced more than a few doubts.

In South's defence, it was the club's first major round match in more than a decade, and a week later considerable improvement was evident in a hard fought 13.15 (93) to 11.13

(79) preliminary final defeat of a powerful Sturt combination. Going into the grand final, Port was generally favoured, but few doubted that the blue and whites were capable of giving a much better account of themselves than they had managed to do a fortnight earlier.

The decisive match of the year was played on Saturday 5th October and drew a crowd of 26,496 to the Adelaide Oval. They were treated to an exhilarating spectacle:

The power of Australian-rules football to thrill a crowd and to test the speed and stamina of players was never more vividly demonstrated than in the grand final League football match between South Adelaide and Port Adelaide, at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday.

South Adelaide, meeting Port Adelaide's speed and vigour with pace and determination of equal standard, brilliantly won by eight points the 1935 premiership - its first since 1899.

The crowd of 26,496 was moved to a frenzy of excitement in the third quarter, when the speed at which the match was played reached its crescendo. South Adelaide gained the upper hand in these stirring exchanges and began the last quarter with a lead of nearly four goals. Port Adelaide, though handicapped by ruck casualties, fought back in courageous fashion and with two or three minutes to play was only two points behind. A virile finish by South Adelaide scored the goal which put the scores out of touch and gave the team its first premiership for 36 years.¹⁶⁴

South Adelaide went into the match with a full strength line-up, whereas Port Adelaide was without just one first choice player - Yates, who had been an effective follower all season. His place in the starting eighteen went to Barr.

¹⁶⁴ 'The Advertiser', 7th October 1935, page 5

1st Quarter

The blue and whites began the match impressively, playing with considerable fire and determination, features of the game in which their opponents normally excelled. With 10 minutes gone they had established an 11 point lead, only for Port to fight back and wrest control, so that midway through the term the lead had changed hands, with the Magpies leading by a single point. Crucially, however, Port had by this stage lost ruckman Jacquier to concussion and this, coupled with Yates' enforced omission from the side, left the team undermanned in the big man division. South follower Masters took full advantage to emerge as the most influential player on view in the opening term which saw the blue and whites ultimately wrest control from the Magpies and head into the first change with a 16 point advantage.

QUARTER TIME: South Adelaide 5.1 (31); Port Adelaide 2.3 (15)

2nd Quarter

With Masters noticeably less prominent Port fought back strongly during a free-flowing 2nd quarter which saw the lead change hands on four separate occasions. The key to the Magpies' ascendancy during the early stages of this term was the strong combined play of their first ruck combination of Reval, Wightman and Quinn. Dermody was also providing drive from his wing where he was clearly outpointing Cahill. However, shortly after Port had hit the front by a couple of points, full back West conceded a needless free kick from which his direct opponent, "Diddy" Munro, kicked truly to restore South's advantage and steady his team. The respite was only brief, however, as brilliantly snapped goals from Hender and Quinn saw Port again assume control, and at this stage it was the black and whites who were looking the most dynamic and purposeful side. Then, in the final minutes of the term, South, with Tully particularly prominent, rallied strongly and a couple of late

goals gave the blue and whites an 11 point lead going into the long break.

HALF TIME: South Adelaide 10.3 (63); Port Adelaide 8.4 (52)



Frank Tully

3rd Quarter

The Magpies began the penultimate term confidently, despite the fact that South had once again assumed control in the ruck. Hollingsworth was particularly conspicuous both overhead and with mobile ground play and a succession of forward forays saw Port draw level on the scoreboard within a few minutes of the resumption. As the Magpies again drove the ball into attack, however, South forced a telling turnover which culminated in Murdy scrambling the ball over the goal line from inches out despite coming under ferocious pressure. The pace of the play began

to accelerate rapidly in the wake of Munro's goal and it was the blue and whites who proved better able to use the ball effectively despite the enhanced pressure. "It was not good football, if neat marking and unhurried, perfectly-timed drop kicking are all that constitutes good football, but it stirred the blood and had the crowd in a turmoil of excitement." ¹⁶⁵

During the closing minutes of the term South forced the ball forward repeatedly, and although Port full back West in particular defended heroically the momentum was clearly with the blue and whites who managed to establish the biggest scoreboard advantage of the match.

THREE QUARTER TIME: South Adelaide 14.7 (91); Port Adelaide 10.8 (68)

4th Quarter

As the final term got underway the blue and whites appeared to hold all the aces. Not only had they been coping with the pressure better than the Magpies, and playing with greater purpose, they also effectively had a one player advantage as an injury to Port ruckman Wightman had left him a virtual passenger. It therefore came as something of a surprise when the black and whites seized the initiative from the opening bounce, attacking relentlessly. However, their play lacked precision, and their kicking for goal was wayward. A succession of attacking forays produced just 1.5, leaving them still 14 points in arrears on the cusp of time-on. Then a cleverly snapped left foot goal from Hender reduced the margin to just 8 points, and moments later Reval had an excellent opportunity to bring his side to within a couple of points. Picking up the ball in the clear, he raced into an open goal, only to decide to take a bounce so as to be able to kick from point blank range. In the act of bouncing, Reval fumbled the ball, giving the South defenders time to catch up with him, bump him out of the way, and relieve the pressure. Their relief was short-lived, however, as not long afterwards Hender was

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, page 6

freed within easy range of goal. His kick bisected the uprights, producing a scoreboard which read South 14.9 (93) to Port 13.13 (91). Just 3 minutes remained.

Desperately needing a lift, and realising that the next goal of the match would prove decisive, the blue and whites frantically forced the ball forward from the ensuing centre bounce. Just when the pressure and intensity were at their height they managed to produce one of the cleanest, most free-flowing passages of play of the entire match, with a succession of neat foot passes culminating with Munro marking near goal and registering his 6th major of the match. Umpire Hill barely had time to bounce the ball before the siren sounded to bring proceedings to a close.

FINAL SCORE: South Adelaide 15.9 (99); Port Adelaide 13.13 (91)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
South Adelaide	5.1	10.3	14.7	15.9	99
Port Adelaide	2.3	8.4	10.8	13.13	91

BEST - South: Tully, Jim Dawes, Sterzl, Cockburn, Masters, Forrester, Mulcahy, Rosewarne, Murdy, Raymond **Port:** Obst, Dermody, Hollingworth, Quinn, Hender, Reval

SCORERS - South: Munro 6.0; Murdy 3.3; Tully 2.3; Rusby 2.1; Jack Dawes, Forrester 1.1 each **Port:** Hender, Prideaux 4.2 each, Hollingworth 2.3; Quinn 1.2; Brown, Reval 1.1 each; Barr 0.2

ATTENDANCE: 26,496 at the Adelaide Oval

Postscript

South Adelaide's players and officials enjoyed a celebratory post-match dinner at the Producers Club Hotel followed by a victory social. Port's players

meanwhile licked their wounds at the Graham Hotel

Both clubs remained at the forefront of the South Australian game until the competition was suspended because of the war at the conclusion of the 1941 season. The blue and whites went on to qualify for the major round in each of the next five seasons, reaching further grand finals in 1937, when they lost to Port, 1938, when they reversed the tables, and 1940, when they went down to Sturt. The Magpies would win premierships in 1936 at the expense of Sturt, 1937 against South, and 1939 versus Torrens.

Following world war two the two clubs could scarcely have enjoyed more contrasting fortunes, with Port remaining a consistent competition pace setter, while South endured almost perennial flirtation with the wooden spoon. Only once, in 1964 under Neil Kerley, would South, known by that time as the Panthers, again experience premiership success, whereas by the turn of the century Port had supplemented its illustrious pedigree to the tune of no fewer than 23 further senior grade flags.

South Swamps Port

1938 SANFL Grand Final: South Adelaide vs. Port Adelaide

South Adelaide's supporters have had to endure more than their fair share of heartache over the years, but the club's 1938 combination warrants serious consideration as one of the finest in South Australian football history. It boasted stars on every line, from follower and captain Jack Dawes to rover Len Lapthorne, wingman Laurie Cahill, half back and 1935 Magarey Medallist Jack Cockburn, and mercurial half forward Max Murdy. In the minor round the club produced many noteworthy performances and high scores, including tallies of 31.15 (201) against Glenelg in round 2, 29.15 (189) versus West Torrens in round 5, and 25.24 (174) against West Adelaide in the opening fixture of the year. It proved the team to beat for most of the season,

"playing well everywhere, and well balanced at all points",¹⁶⁶ and ultimately securing the minor premiership with 15 wins and 2 defeats, two wins and a sizeable amount of percentage ahead of second placed Norwood, which was bidding for its first premiership of the decade, South having gone top in 1935.

The finals saw a continuation of the high scores which had abounded during the home and away rounds. In front of 20,195 spectators in the 1st semi final reigning premier Port Adelaide comfortably accounted for West Torrens by 28 points, 16.22 (118) to 13.12 (90), sending out a clear message that the 1938 premiership was by no means a two horse race. The following Saturday saw South shake off a persistent challenge from Norwood to get home by 20 points, and when Port followed its demolition of Torrens with a similarly resounding victory (19.25 to 12.13) over the Redlegs in the preliminary final there were many who were all too ready to clamber aboard the Magpie bandwagon. This was despite the fact that South had exhibited consummate superiority in meetings between the two teams during the minor round, winning 20.24 (144) to 14.15 (99) in round 3 at Adelaide, and 15.21 (111) to 11.12 (78) at Alberton in round 10.

South Wins In Spectacular Fashion

The grand final attracted a healthy crowd of 33,364, and provided fans with some of the most spectacular football seen on such an occasion for many a year. Much of that spectacular football came from a South Adelaide team which, aided by what slight breeze there was, booted 6.3 to Port's 4.3 in the opening term, with its on ball division well on top. Somewhat unusually, that on ball division was structured in a fashion that would not become generally en vogue until well after World War Two, with a medium-sized 'ruck-rover' type

¹⁶⁶ Steve McKee, former South Adelaide full forward, writing in 'The SA Football Budget', 30/7/38, page 5.

being used to help counter Port's vaunted roving division of Quinn and Skelly.



A cigar-toting South skipper Jack Dawes is chaired from the arena by ecstatic team mates and supporters following his side's epic victory.

That roving division was very much to the fore during a second term which saw the Magpies add 5.2 to South's 3.2 to tie up the scores at the long break. With some of the football scintillating to behold, and nothing between the teams, the crowd was in a state of rare excitement, but the third quarter was to see the blue and whites blow the game apart with a blistering exhibition of football that saw them add

12.4 to 2.3 to in effect seal their triumph. Players like Laphorne, Templeton and Jobson, and most particularly wingman Laurie Cahill, were constantly in the thick of the action, and performing with such verve and brilliance that Port could do nothing to counter them, and although they rallied sufficiently to outscore their opponents by 15 points in the final quarter it was a case of much too little too late.

South Adelaide's final tally of 23.14 (152) established a new record for the SANFL grand final and was testimony to its superiority. Port's score of 15.16 (106) was high enough to have won most games, but it was well beaten.

Sadly for South's long-suffering supporters, although the team continued as a league power for another couple of seasons there were to be no further flags, and indeed the club has managed just one since, in 1964 under Neil Kerley. Port Adelaide, of course, has gone from strength to strength; the club went top for the thirteenth time in 1939, and there have been numerous further premierships since.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
South Adelaide	6.3	9.5	21.9	23.14	152
Port Adelaide	4.3	9.5	11.8	15.16	106

BEST - South: Cahill, Laphorne, Rusby, Cockburn, Hardiman, Jack Dawes, Prior, Jobson **Port:** Quinn, West, Bennett, Johnston, Dermody

SCORERS - South: Rusby 5.1; Hardiman 4.3; Laphorne, Murdy 3.2; Rosewarne 3.1; Brown 2.1; Jack Dawes, Prior 1.1; Appleton 1.0; Templeton 0.1; rushed 0.1 **Port:** Hollingworth, Skelly 4.1; Heath 1.3; Hender, Quinn, Wightman 1.2; Reval, Rudd 1.1; Dangerfield 1.0; Abbott 0.2; West 0.1

ATTENDANCE: 33,364 at the Adelaide Oval

SOUTH PARK

Formed: Uncertain, possibly 1877

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

A meeting at the Prince Albert Hotel, Wright Street on 7 April 1877 saw the election of a committee for the South Park Football Club, although whether this was actually the club's initial meeting is unclear. What is certain is that, a few weeks later, on 30 April, South Park sent two delegates to the inaugural meeting of the South Australian Football Association, as a result of which the club became a founder member of that organisation.

South Park fielded a fairly young team in the SAFA's initial season of 1877, and finished 6th out of 8 clubs on the semi-official premiership list after winning 5 and drawing 2 of their 17 matches. Over the next few years the team improved, and in both 1881 and 1883 managed to clamber as high as 3rd place on the ladder.

In 1881 South Park engaged in a prestigious match against visiting VFA club Carlton. Watched by a sizeable crowd for the time of roughly 3,000, the visitors proved too strong, winning 6.9 to 2.8, but the South Park players gave a good account of themselves and were by no means disgraced.

Perhaps the most noteworthy identity associated with the South Park Football Club was John Cresswell, who served as the club's secretary in 1879. Cresswell was later secretary of the South Australian Cricket Association, and in 1923 had a grandstand at the Adelaide Oval named after him.

After finishing 4th out of 5 clubs in 1884 South Park amalgamated with Adelaide.

STURT

Club Address: P.O. Box 10, Unley 5061, South Australia

Website: www.sturtfc.com.au

Home Ground: Unley Oval

Formed: 1901

Colours: Oxford and Cambridge blue

Emblem: Double Blues

Senior Grade Premierships: 1915, 1919, 1926, 1932, 1940, 1966-67-68-69-70, 1974, 1976, 2002 (13 total)

Other Premierships: Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy - 1968, 1978, 1983, 2008 (4 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1954, 1975 (2 total)

Magarey Medallists: Hendrick Wayne 1903; Harry Cumberland 1911; Victor York Richardson 1920*; Horrie Riley 1923; Keith Dunn 1933; Len Fitzgerald 1952, 1954 & 1959; John Halbert 1961; Greg Whittlesea 1988; Brodie Atkinson 1997; Damian Squire 1999 & 2000; Jade Sheedy 2002#; Tim Weatherald 2002#; Luke Crane 2008 (13 Medallists/16 Medals)

Tassie Medallists: Nil

All Australians: Len Fitzgerald 1953; Clayton Thompson 1953; John Halbert 1961; Brenton Adcock 1966; Rick Schoff 1966 & 1969; Tony Burgan 1972; Rick Davies 1980 (captain); Peter Motley 1983 & 1985; Greg Whittlesea 1988 (11 total)

League Top Goalkickers: F.Golding (30) 1920; P.Caust (57) 1955; R.Sawley (70) 1964; K.Whelan (107) 1973 & (108) 1974; R.Davies (151) 1983; B.Chambers (112) 2007, (109) 2008 & (82) 2009 (9 total)

Highest Score: 32.19 (211) vs. Woodville 7.7 (49) at Woodville Oval in round 4 1974

Most Games: 360 by Paul Bagshaw from 1964 to 1980

Record Home Attendance: 22,015 in round 9 1968: Sturt 6.9 (45); Port Adelaide 5.14 (44)

Record Finals Attendance: 66,897 for 1976 grand final at Football Park: Sturt 17.14 (116); Port Adelaide 10.15 (75)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by the SANFL in 1998*

indicates tied for the Medal

Norwood and Port Adelaide may possess the tradition and the premierships, North Adelaide and West Adelaide the galaxies of champion players, and Central District may have nouveau riche pretensions which have already gone some way toward obliterating the scars of a less than glorious past, but try a word association test involving the name 'Sturt' with South Australian football followers of more than thirty years of age - and long memories - and the chances are that the single most frequently proffered response would be "class".

The reason for such a response is simple. The Sturt side that dominated South Australian football during the second half of the 1960s had an impact which no other team in the history of the SANFL, with the possible exception of the great Port Adelaide side which won six successive premierships during the 1950s, ever managed. However, Port Adelaide's triumphs were founded on grim determination, fierce aggression and an almost fanatical desire to succeed; during their record sequence of grand final wins they only once won comfortably, and on at least a couple of occasions they were blessed by good fortune. During Sturt's period of dominance it was otherwise, an 11 point victory over Port Adelaide in the 1967 grand final being the only occasion when success could have been said to have been achieved with any real difficulty.

The real turning point in Sturt's fortunes came when former Norwood and West Adelaide supremo Jack Oatey was appointed coach in 1962. Initially, Oatey was less than enthusiastic about the Double Blues' approach, remarking that "You at Sturt can't even sell an ice cream to an Eskimo". However, the Sturt committee, led by chairman Ray Kutcher, was persistent, and finally landed its man.

Oatey's previous coaching record included premierships with Norwood in 1946, '48 and '52, and a string of narrow grand final losses to Port Adelaide while at West. He had a reputation as an innovator and astute tactician, but it took a while for his message to get across to his predominantly youthful charges at Unley.

In 1962 the Double Blues managed just 4 wins from 19 games to finish 2nd last. "Sometimes you couldn't help feeling that Oatey and his players weren't operating on the same wave-length," it was suggested. Moreover:

*it may have been expecting too much for Sturt players to absorb the finer points of Oatey's teaching in one season. And finer points are the crux of Oatey's method. Handball with either hand, bullet-like find-a-player foot passes, thinking two or three kicks ahead, blinding non-stop speed.*¹⁶⁷

Such were the traits that Oatey had instilled in the West Adelaide players during his stint there; at Sturt, they would be honed to a previously unimagined level.

Among the list of forty-one players used by the Double Blues in 1962 were names like Hicks, Short, Jarrett, Clarke, Martin, Schoff, Murphy, Halbert and Rigney, all of whom were to play prominent roles in the club's success over forthcoming seasons, and all of whom, bar Halbert, were in the early stages of their careers.

Sturt showed measurable improvement in 1963, winning 10 out of 20 matches for the season to finish 6th. In 1964, finals fever returned to Unley with a vengeance as the Double Blues downed Glenelg by 5 points in the first semi final before succumbing to eventual premiers South Adelaide by 41 points in the preliminary final. Afterwards, Oatey told Ray Kutcher that he needed to see just one additional player at the club in 1965 in order to mount a genuine premiership threat. The player Oatey had in mind was former Essendon

¹⁶⁷ *South Australian National Football League 1963 Official Yearbook*, page 77.

utility Robert Shearman, who since 1961 had been starring for West Torrens. The Eagles were unwilling to clear Shearman but so keen was the player himself to join Sturt that he willingly stood out of football for twelve months in order to obtain an automatic clearance.¹⁶⁸



Legendary Double Blues coach Jack Oatey.

Twelve months later, Oatey's prophetic declarations concerning Shearman would come to fruition in quite dramatic fashion, but even without his contribution the Blues continued to improve in 1965.

That said, it needed a last round win over Woodville coupled with a loss the same day by arch rivals North Adelaide against South Adelaide, to see the Blues displace the Roosters in 4th place. Oatey's initial feelings of relief were

¹⁶⁸ Ironically, Shearman's decision was rendered 'less painful' after he broke an ankle playing in a pre-season match for Sturt, meaning that he would have missed a large proportion of the ensuing season in any case.

quickly supplanted by a sense of eager relish. "Finals football is different," he enthused. "Anybody can win."

Playing superbly, Sturt outclassed Norwood in the first semi final by 45 points and then outlasted a determined South Adelaide in the preliminary final to win a thriller by just 7 points. In the grand final, in front of a league record crowd of 62,543, the Double Blues trailed Port Adelaide by 35 points early in the final term before coming home with a wet sail, as the cliché goes, to fall short by just 3 points. The inevitable disappointment was mixed with defiance: no one at Unley doubted that 1966 would see the Double Blues' favours adorning the tower of the West End Brewery for the first time since 1940.

With Bob Shearman slotting seamlessly in at centre Sturt's football for most of the 1966 season bore the unmistakable hallmarks of a team which had finally come of age. The Blues lost only 2 minor round matches all season to top the ladder with some comfort, 4 wins ahead of both Port Adelaide and South Adelaide. A 1 point second semi final loss to the Magpies proved to be nothing more than a temporary distraction as they swept inexorably to the flag. In the preliminary final Sturt annihilated North Adelaide 22.14 (146) to 9.7 (61) before gaining conclusive and indeed quite astonishing revenge by 56 points against Port Adelaide on grand final day. 'Astonishing' is not too outlandish an adjective: the Magpies of that era simply did not lose matches by margins of that magnitude. With time on in the 3rd term approaching Sturt led by juts 3 points, 7.8 to 7.5, before suddenly finding another gear and adding 9.8 to 0.3 over the next quarter and a bit before Ashley McKay chipped in with a consolation goal for Port in the dying moments. Final scores were Sturt 16.16 (112) defeated Port Adelaide 8.8 (56), with former Hawthorn ruckman Malcolm Hill, centre half forward and captain John Halbert, defenders Brenton Adcock, Philip 'Sandy' Nelson and Bruce Jarrett, and centreman Bob Shearman the leading lights for the victors.

A week later Sturt took on VFL runners up Collingwood in a challenge match. A crowd of 30,794 at the

Adelaide Oval were treated to another vintage display as the Double Blues won with ease, 18.12 (120) to 11.18 (84). Collingwood president Tom Sherrin was generous in defeat, conceding "I was amazed with their skill - it was a real shock. They would be strong contenders for a VFL premiership."

Sturt finished half a win behind North Adelaide at the end of the 1967 minor round but then comfortably overturned that club in the second semi final by 44 points. The grand final was a repeat of the previous season, with Sturt heavily favoured having already defeated Port Adelaide by 23, 22 and 28 points during the 1967 minor round. The grand final was considerably closer, but once again Sturt proved to have too much class when the pressure was at its height. When the final siren sounded the Double Blues were 11 points to the good, 13.10 (88) to 10.17 (77), having been best served by back pocket Brenton Adcock, ruckman Tony Clarkson, utility Rick Schoff, ruck rover John Murphy and rover Roger Rigney.

Carlton, which had finished 3rd in the VFL, took on Sturt at the Adelaide Oval a week later and, after leading 7.7 to 7.4 at the long break, were overrun in the second half as the Double Blues added 12.4 to 4.8 to win easily. Carlton coach Ron Barassi ventured the opinion after the game that "Sturt are one of the most talented and certainly one of the top teams in Australia".

This assessment was born out in 1968 as the Blues continued to dominate. After losing only 2 minor round matches all year - both against Port Adelaide - Sturt proved to have the Magpies' measure when it really counted with wins in the second semi final, 15.15 (105) to 13.14 (92), and the grand final, 12.18 (90) to 9.9 (63). Best for the Blues in the grand final included ruck rovers Paul 'Mr. Magic' Bagshaw and John Murphy, centre half forward Rick Schoff, ruckman Tony Clarkson and first year rover Peter Endersbee.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹Technically, it could be argued that Endersbee was actually a second year player as he had been named on the bench for one match in 1967 when a number of his team mates were away in Perth with the state team; however, he had not actually taken the field on that occasion. Endersbee's 2 first

Sturt lost to Carlton on the Saturday following the grand final in a match which, in South Australia at least, was billed as being for the 'unofficial' championship of Australia (a description which seems almost to contradict itself). As far as most Victorians were concerned, of course, the 'real' championship of Australia had been determined a week earlier on the Melbourne Cricket Ground when Carlton defeated Essendon, while the opinion of the football-loving fraternity west of the Nullarbor is similarly easy to infer.



A Paul Bagshaw "screamer".

Sturt finished the 1969 minor round on 15 wins from 20 matches, 2 fewer than minor premier Glenelg. However, once again, when the finals got underway, the Blues proved capable of elevating their football to another plane. In the

quarter 'checkside' goals from deep in the scoreboard pocket were a highlight of the 1968 grand final.

second semi final they outclassed the Bays to the tune of 38 points, 18.16 (124) to 11.20 (86), and a fortnight later they were even more convincing against the same opponents, winning by nearly 11 goals and accumulating a grand final record score in the process. Final scores were Sturt 24.15 (159) to Glenelg 13.16 (94), with half forward flanker John Tilbrook (4 goals), ruck rover Paul Bagshaw, full forward Malcolm Greenslade (who bagged a grand final record-equalling 9 goals), wingman Daryl Hicks, and back pocket Brenton Adcock best for the victorious Blues.

The only blot on a record-breaking season came with a 57 point loss against Richmond in the so called "Championship of Australia" clash the following week.

Sturt made it five flags in a row with a disarming lack of fuss in 1970, losing only 3 minor round matches for the year before downing Port Adelaide in the second semi final by 35 points and Glenelg in the grand final by 21 points. Bagshaw, Rigney, Endersbee, Greenslade (6 of Sturt's 12 goals) and Schoff were the best players.

Carlton 21.13 (139) defeated Sturt 12.22 (94) in the Champions match.

The Double Blue bubble finally burst in 1971 when, after reaching the finals but failing to secure the double chance, Sturt lost the first semi final to first time finalist Central District by 27 points. Afterwards, stalwarts Trevor Clarke, Roger Rigney and Rick Schoff retired, while during the close season John Tilbrook was cleared to Melbourne for \$18,000; it would take Sturt a while to cover these losses.

In 1972 Sturt, while still capable of playing some excellent football, finished 5th, missing participation in the major round for the first time since 1963.

The 1973 season saw the introduction of a final five system with Sturt overcoming North Adelaide in the first ever qualifying final (played between the sides finishing the minor round in 2nd and 3rd positions) before losing the second semi final to Glenelg and, in an astonishing form reversal, the preliminary final to the Roosters by a record margin of 93 points. Full forward Ken Whelan kicked more than 100 goals

for the season, the first Sturt player to do so since 'Bo' Morton in 1940, but this afforded little consolation.

Oatey took the embarrassment hard and in 1974 he had the Blues primed to a peak and producing football comparable with their best form of the five in a row era. Where the teams of the late '60s had been renowned for their attacking prowess, however, the Double Blues of '74 owed much of their success to a watertight defence, which statistically proved nearly 20% better than their nearest rivals.

Sturt lost only 3 minor round matches before progressing straight to the grand final with a hard fought 7.19 (61) to 8.8 (56) victory over Port Adelaide. The grand final opposition was provided by reigning premiers Glenelg and, after another dour tussle, the Double Blues emerged victorious by 15 points, 9.16 (70) to 8.7 (55). The win was all the more meritorious in that Sturt had to kick into the breeze in the last quarter after leading by just 5 points at the final change but, after being enjoined by Oatey to "attack, attack, attack", added 3.4 to 2.0 to claim an improbable triumph. Best players for Sturt were ruckmen Rick Davies and Greg Wild, ruck rover Paul Bagshaw, rover Mick Nunan, and back pocket Brenton Adcock in his last ever league game.

In the "Championship of Australia" series, which was now contested by teams from all four of the major football states,¹⁷⁰ Sturt defeated East Fremantle but lost heavily to a Richmond combination which was indisputably one of the greatest in Australian football history.

In 1975 Sturt remained a force but were somewhat surprisingly bundled out of the major round in successive weeks by Glenelg and Port Adelaide. A small measure of consolation was afforded by the club's success in winning the Datsun-sponsored League Cup, contested by the sides occupying the top eight places on the premiership ladder after all teams had played each other once. The competition was

¹⁷⁰ By common agreement, the four major football states are those where football constitutes the number one traditional winter sport: Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

not well patronised, however, and 1975 proved to be the only year in which it was held.

The following year the Double Blues continued to play good football but the consensus was that they were a trifle past their best. 'Too old and too slow' was the catch cry, and when Glenelg annihilated Sturt 28.16 (184) to 15.12 (102) in the last minor round match of the season and followed this up with another comfortable win in the qualifying final this assessment seemed vindicated.

Come first semi final day, however, and a different Sturt emerged, only Norwood's exceptional accuracy in front of goal preventing a massacre. The Double Blues won 17.23 (125) to 16.3 (99) and in the following week's preliminary final maintained their good form to gain revenge over Glenelg by 7 points in a thriller.

Sturt's grand final opponents were Port Adelaide, which had been far and away the season's dominant club. The bookmakers made the Magpies 10/7-on favourites but, perhaps significantly, players from the other eight league clubs, when asked to predict the winner for a feature in the grand final issue of 'Football Budget', seemed less sure, three having no hesitation in tipping the Double Blues, with West Adelaide's Bob Loveday predicting a draw. "Port should win it, but the way Sturt are playing I can't see them losing"¹⁷¹ was his assessment.

Interest in the match was unprecedented, in part because of the intense rivalry between the two clubs which had burgeoned over the preceding decade. An all-time record crowd of 66,897 crammed into Football Park, many of them being forced to sit on the grass just outside the boundary line. Many thousands more were locked out.

Port started strongly with the aid of a 3 to 4 goal breeze but, with Sturt ruckman Rick Davies acting as an extra defender and taking several telling marks, numerous Magpie forward thrusts were repelled. At quarter time Port Adelaide led by only 8 points, and thereafter the Double Blues

¹⁷¹ 'The South Australian Football Budget', 25/9/76, page 4.

gradually assumed complete control adding 16.11 to 8.10 over the remainder of the match to win 'running away'. Rick Davies gave one of the greatest all round performances seen in a grand final accumulating 21 kicks, 21 handballs, 15 marks and 21 hit outs, all the while displaying a "nonchalant air and unruffled ease". Other notable contributors to what the vast majority of Sturt supporters would probably tend to regard as the club's finest hour were ruck rover Paul Bagshaw - always a dynamic force in big matches - the half forward line of Michael Graham, Robbert Klomp and John Murphy,¹⁷² and centreman Brendon Howard. Seventy-five years on from its formation the Sturt Football Club's position had never seemed so secure, but the next two decades were to demonstrate that no club can afford to rest on its laurels when it comes to maintaining a position of pre-eminence in the cut-throat world of Australian football.

Sturt's decline following its repeated premiership successes of the 1960s and '70s when, along with Glenelg, Norwood and Port Adelaide, it was popularly regarded as comprising the 'big four' of South Australian football, was at first virtually imperceptible. However, in retrospect the first writing could be said to have appeared on the wall in 1977 when the side surprisingly slumped to 7th. This appeared to be merely a temporary aberration, however, as the following year the Blues achieved their greatest ever minor round return of 21 wins from 22 matches before comfortably defeating Norwood to go straight in to the grand final.

Unfortunately - some would say almost tragically - the Blues then chose grand final day - once more against Norwood - to suffer one of the most embarrassing capitulations in SANFL history. For the first three quarters Sturt seemed in total command but, thanks to a mixture of complacency and uncharacteristic inaccuracy in front of goal, led by only 29 points at the last change, 12.21 (93) to 9.10 (64). Exuberantly grateful to still be in with a chance after

¹⁷² This was the last of Murphy's 204 games for Sturt in a career which began in 1962 and which also took in 5 interstate matches for South Australia and four seasons and 58 VFL matches with South Melbourne.

being so comprehensively outplayed the Redlegs hit back strongly in the last term and when the final siren blew the astonishing sight which greeted the 50,867 spectators in the ground as well as the thousands more watching on television was a scoreboard which read: Norwood 16.15 (111) defeated Sturt 14.26 (110). The best side in the SANFL for most of the season, indeed arguably one of the best sides which the SANFL has ever produced, had lost the plot, not to mention the premiership, in the final thirty minutes of the year.

The all too obvious lesson which ought to have been learned from the failure - that success is not self-replicating but needs constantly to be worked at in order to be maintained - was seemingly not grasped by the powers that be at Sturt. The team plummeted to an all time low of 9th in 1979 and although it did recover to contest the finals in 1980 (3rd), 1982 (4th), 1983 (2nd), 1985 (5th) and 1988 (5th) it soon became clear that the conviction and irrepressibility which had characterised the majority of the Oatey era were gone.¹⁷³

Jack Oatey¹⁷⁴ retired at the end of the 1982 season after a twenty-one year stint at Unley during which the club had been almost perpetually at the forefront of the game in South Australia. During his time at the club Oatey guided the Blues to 314 wins and 4 draws out of a total of 470 matches for a strike rate of 67.2%. More significantly, he steered the club to a total of seven premierships from nine grand finals, with the Blues failing to contest the major round on just five occasions. Following his departure, the club's performances and standing seemed to grow progressively worse with each successive year. Unbelievably to those who grew up during an era when the Sturt name was synonymous with brilliance and achievement, in each of the eight seasons between 1989

¹⁷³ The legacy, however, lived on for a while; when former Richmond player Mervyn Keane was appointed Sturt coach in 1985 he considered that he was joining one of the top dozen clubs in Australia.

¹⁷⁴ Oatey died in 1995 and the following year was included in the AFL's inaugural 'Hall of Fame'.

and 1996 the Double Blues finished rock solid last. Not even in its formative years did the club struggle so repeatedly.

Sturt originally entered the South Australian Football Association in 1901, making it the Association's seventh club. Founded by Unley lawyer, Arthur Thomas, who four years earlier had also established the Sturt Cricket Club, the team adopted a combination of Cambridge and Oxford blue as its colours by virtue of the situation of Unley Oval at the meeting point of Cambridge Terrace and Oxford Terrace.

Sturt did not have long to prepare for its debut season. The SAFA meeting at which the club's application to join was considered took place on 1 April 1901, a mere month before the season was scheduled to commence. Sturt's first game was against Norwood, which triumphed by 33 points, but those who had expected the newcomers to be out of their depth were swiftly proved wrong: as early as round 4 the Blues broke through for their first win against South Adelaide at Unley. True, the side only managed a further 3 victories for the season to finish, as universally predicted, in last position, but 2 of its victories were achieved against eventual runners-up Port Adelaide, and on no occasion during the year did the newcomers give the impression of being 'out of their depth'.

As often seems to happen, however, the initial promise rapidly dissolved. Sturt managed just 3 wins and a draw from 24 matches over the next two seasons, finishing bottom both times, and sustaining some hefty defeats in the process. The only major bright spot came with the emergence of a player who has since come to be regarded as the Double Blues' first bona fide champion. Hendrick 'Taffy' Waye was one of Australia's finest ruckmen for much of the first decade of this century, regularly beating taller, heavier Victorian opponents in the interstate arena. In 1903 in particular Waye was indefatigable, his Herculean efforts in a consistently losing side earning him the Magarey Medal. Waye played a total of just 71 senior games in a ten season career, for most of this time making the twenty-five mile round trip each Saturday from his farm at Willunga on horseback or by buggy.

In 1904 and 1905 Sturt showed improvement, just failing to make the finals on both occasions. The side made a poor start to the 1906 season resulting in club captain Claude Fulton being ousted and replaced by the more popular John Buttrose. Captains in those days were in many respects the equivalent of today's coaches, and under Buttrose the Blues showed immediate and quite marked improvement, eventually making the finals for the first time. Once there, however, the side's major round inexperience betrayed them and they were quickly bundled out of contention by Norwood to the sizeable tune for the era of 8 goals.



Early Sturt skipper John Buttrose.

Confidence at Unley was high, however. The club appeared to be on the verge of establishing itself as a genuine power in the competition, and with the appointment as captain of former West Torrens, North Adelaide and Collingwood player Oscar Hyman optimism soared.

Hyman's two year tenure proved disastrous, however. Sturt finished bottom both years, and the club's reputation correspondingly declined.

Enter John Dempsey, an influential member of the Municipal Tramways Trust and an ardent Sturt supporter, who was to play a significant role in engineering what it would not be too fanciful to describe as the club's first 'golden era'. Irritated at the Blues' failure to kick on after reaching the finals two years earlier, Dempsey met with his friend Arthur Thomas, himself a prime mover at Sturt, and offered to arrange accommodation and employment for any high quality imports that the club could attract.

Bert Renfrey, a football veteran with six clubs in four states, was appointed Sturt's 1909 captain and, largely on the basis of his recommendations, Dempsey's offer was brought into realisation. Bolstered by the likes of Harold 'Vic' Cumberland from Victoria, and Frank 'Diver' Dunne, Percy Champion, Robert Honeybone, Phil Matson, Albert Heinrichs and Joe Bushell from Western Australia Sturt were expected to mount a strong challenge for the flag.

Also joining Sturt in 1909, although not strictly speaking one of 'Dempsey's Immigrants', was Frank Golding who, while on his way from Perth to Melbourne, where he intended to play cricket, stopped off in Adelaide where he happened across an old Western Australian compatriot in the shape of 'Diver' Dunne. Excited at what he believed was on the verge of happening at Sturt Dunne quickly persuaded Golding, who was as accomplished a footballer as he was a cricketer, to remain in Adelaide and lend his weight to the Double Blue cause. Golding not only stayed, he went on to play a total of 207 games before retiring in 1927 after playing a prominent part in Sturt's first three premierships.

The arrival of the 'foreign legion' brought great excitement to Unley. In March 1909 over 1,000 people attended a reception at the Unley Town Hall at which the newcomers were welcomed to the district, and several weeks later Unley Oval was full as 10,000 supporters revelled in a dream start, the Blues thrashing South Adelaide by 52 points.

Thereafter Sturt endured something of a mixed season, winning 6 out of 12 matches to miss the finals by a

single game. This still constituted an improvement, however, and laid the foundations for future success.

Statistically, Sturt's arrival as a league power is readily summarised:

Period	P	W	L	D	Success Rate	Flag	Finals	Bottom
1901-9	124	32	90	2	26.6%	0	1	5
1910-15 & 1919-26	202	115	84	3	57.7%	3	11	0

Improvement began in earnest in 1910 when the Blues played off for the premiership for the first time. Indeed, the side came within a goal post's width of the flag. After securing the minor premiership Sturt overcame Norwood by 8 points in a tough second semi final before fronting up to Port Adelaide in the final. Five points adrift in the dying moments Sturt's final desperate attacking foray culminated in full forward Golding marking within easy range of goal. Tragically for the Blues, however, his shot hit a goal post, consigning his team to a 4 point defeat and a re-match with Port the following week. There was to be no such drama on this occasion as Sturt played poorly to go down by 17 points.

After the challenge final Phil Matson returned to Western Australia where he enjoyed an illustrious coaching career, steering East Perth to seven premierships in nine seasons from 1919.

Bert Renfrey was appointed state captain in 1911 and led South Australia to a famous triumph in the Adelaide Carnival. Sturt, however, were less successful, dropping to 4th, a position they maintained in each of the next three seasons. Renfrey gradually lost favour with the club hierarchy and was ousted as skipper in 1913 in somewhat acrimonious circumstances.

The ultimate breakthrough finally arrived in 1915 under the captaincy of Bill Mayman, although when Sturt

barely scraped into the finals with a 6-6 win/loss record the omens did not appear all that promising. Second semi final opponents South Adelaide were widely favoured to bring a peremptory end to the Blues' season but after a tight first term there was only one team in it: Sturt, which won easily in the end by 24 points, 9.6 (60) to 4.12 (36).

Straight kicking in the final brought a deceptively comfortable victory over West Adelaide next, 7.3 (45) to 2.13 (25), before minor premiers Port Adelaide exercised their right of challenge on the last Saturday of the season.

The black and whites had won the previous two premierships, and were playing off for the flag for the seventh consecutive time, and few pundits seriously gave Sturt much chance. The Blues, however, were not to be denied. In front of a crowd of 13,000 spectators, including many Services personnel, they played tough, resolute finals football throughout, holding their own early before breaking clear late on to record a hard earned but thoroughly deserved 2 goal victory. Final scores were Sturt 6.10 (46) to Port Adelaide 4.10 (34), with centreman and captain Bill Mayman best on ground, followed by rover Bill Noal (who booted 5.5 of the Blues' total), half forward flanker Howard Rayner - incredibly playing his one and only game for Sturt - ruckman Ivor Nicolle, back pocket Clarrie Ryan and full back Doug McDougall.

Sturt's chance at successive premierships had to wait to wait for four years while the league went into recess because of the war. The long wait only served to intensify the players' hunger. Sturt won 10 out of 12 minor round matches to claim the minor premiership and most observers rated them as firm favourites to take out the flag. Unknown to these observers, however, unrest was rife at Unley, with Mayman's captaincy style increasingly eliciting the displeasure of his team mates. In the first semi final North Adelaide capitalised on these problems to record a comfortable 37 point win. Fortunately, as minor premiers, the Blues would have the right of challenge.

Training leading up to the challenge final was fraught with tension and uneasiness. The 'Unley News' reporter noting that "The players form cliques which do not mingle and the trainers will have terrible difficulty in sending a united team on to the field" and concluded by likening the players to "a bunch of schoolboys".

Sturt's challenge final opponents were a battle-weary North Adelaide combination which, after defeating Sturt, had survived a titanic two game battle with West Torrens, eventually emerging victorious in the replay by just 5 points.

North Adelaide, having won the toss, kicked with the breeze in the opening term, and by quarter time had established a 26 point advantage. Given the predominantly low scores of the era this might have been expected to prove enough for victory but Sturt refused to capitulate. By the long break the Blues had got to within 5 points and thereafter a tight, tense tussle developed. At the twenty-two minute mark of the final quarter North led by a goal, 5.9 (39) to 4.9 (33), only for a Leslie Smith snapshot to bring Sturt level. During the last five minutes of the game the Blues gained the ascendancy but failed to capitalise. For the first and only time in SANFL history two finals in the same series had been drawn.

The replay was scheduled for a public holiday, Wednesday 8 October - Labor Day. The performance in the drawn challenge final had had the happy side effect of uniting the Sturt players, at any rate for the time being, and practice prior to the replay was reportedly excellent.

A huge crowd of 35,000 turned up at Adelaide Oval for the replay. The first half was tight, with both team's customary fluency inhibited by a strong cross wind. North led at half time by 7 points but by the final change of an extremely low scoring encounter they had extended this to 14 points and the game looked as good as over. However, midway through the last term goals to Sellick and Nicolle - Sturt's first for the entire game - brought the Blues to within a couple of points. North then held out until two minutes from the end when a behind by Sturt's Beatty heralded a frenetic climax to the

game. This culminated in big, balding ruckman Ivor Nicolle pulling down a desperate mark within range of goal with just thirty seconds remaining. A score looked inevitable, but would it be a behind, giving rise to another replay, or a goal? Nicolle took a brief, three step run up and carved out a major niche for himself in Sturt's history by bisecting the big ones and giving the Blues a 5 point win, 3.5 (23) to 2.6 (18), so that:

*Wildly cheered the Sturt supporters,
Never such a game as this,
While the captain treated Nicolle
To a mighty hug and kiss.*¹⁷⁵

The unity of spirit and purpose which had yielded a flag in 1919 soon evaporated. Mayman's tenure as captain came to an abrupt and controversial end midway through the 1920 season and he was replaced by local hero and players' favourite Victor Richardson¹⁷⁶. This only served to aggravate matters, for whereas Mayman had been popular with the club committee, Richardson, who tended to speak his mind, was not. In this way the oft enacted polarisation between management and players came very much to the fore at Sturt, with predictable results. After a 1920 season which yielded just 5 wins and a draw from 12 matches and a drop to 5th place on the ladder Vic Richardson resigned as captain and player and moved to local district club Kingswood hoping to rediscover the enjoyment in the game which the acrimony at Sturt had eroded.

Sturt improved slightly to finish 4th in 1921 but the following year, with Richardson back in harness, they surprisingly tumbled to 7th.

The 1923 season ended with a semi final defeat by North Adelaide but owing to the vagaries of the system in

¹⁷⁵ Serge, writing in 'The Unley News', and quoted in *True Blue*, page 68.

¹⁷⁶ Richardson was an all-round sportsman of some repute, with expertise in cricket (to Test level), baseball and squash.

operation at the time Sturt were officially placed 2nd, with the red and whites reverting to their pre-finals classification of 4th after losing the final to Norwood.

In 1924 Sturt lost the premiership decider by 8 points against West Torrens, giving that club the first premiership in its twenty five year history. Afterwards, Vic Richardson made the traditional post-match trip to the victors' rooms and declared "We would have rather lost to you than any other team. Well done everyone!" Somehow it is hard to imagine, say, Luke Hodge entering the Fremantle changing rooms after the Dockers' first grand final triumph and expressing similar sentiments. In many ways, the philosophy which underscores the game has altered every bit as much as its rules and tactics.

With the multi-talented Richardson on the sidelines preparing for what he hoped would be selection in the Australian cricket team to tour England the following year the Blues finished 3rd in 1925. Clearly, they were not all that far off the mark, and when Richardson failed to achieve selection for the Ashes tour there were hopes that, if he could put his disappointment behind him, he might prove to be the missing piece of the jigsaw. "I'll play one game and see how I go," he told club skipper Frank Golding. Thankfully for Sturt his first game against Glenelg was a good one and thereafter he never looked back. Despite a mid-season slump the Blues took out the minor premiership and seemed well placed to secure the flag. However, a shock first semi final loss to Norwood lowered their stocks significantly, and they entered the challenge final against Norwood's conquerors, North Adelaide, as underdogs.

In what was to prove a fitting swansong for both Richardson and Golding the Blues proved the sceptics wrong in convincing fashion, leading at every change by 5, 6 and 12 points, before coasting to a 13 point triumph, 9.10 (64) to 7.9 (51). A crowd of 30,000 witnessed the clash, which proved to be Sturt's last finals match of the 1920s.

The Blues' re-emergence as a major force began in 1930 when they downed minor premier North Adelaide in the

second semi final. However, there was still some way to go as was evidenced by their 34 point capitulation to Port Adelaide in the following week's final.

Double Blues' supporters with exceptionally long memories look back on the 1931 premiership as one of those which 'got away'. After missing out on the minor premiership by 0.07% Sturt enjoyed swift revenge over Port Adelaide in the second semi final, winning by a single point, 11.16 (82) to 11.15 (81). Under the new Page-McIntyre system of playing finals this meant that the Blues now proceeded straight to the premiership-deciding grand final, where they would meet the winners of the following week's preliminary final between Port Adelaide and North Adelaide. Somewhat to most people's surprise, this proved to be North, and seven days later the red and whites carried on where they left off, downing Sturt in the grand final with some comfort by 38 points. North Adelaide full forward Ken Farmer - 'football's Bradman' to South Australians - proved to be the difference between the two sides with 6 goals. However, Sturt coach Sid White, who had been appointed in 1930 after a 145 game career with Norwood, was confident that sound foundations for future success had now been laid.

For the time, White had some fairly innovative coaching ideas. When the players turned up for the first training session of 1932 he told them, "Tonight you will train without footballs, so when I introduce them next week you will be hungry for them." Such pronouncements inevitably seem hackneyed to today's supposedly more sophisticated way of thinking, but there is no doubt that White's methods were responsible for moulding Sturt into a much more accomplished and competitive unit.

Sturt won 9 lost 7 and drew 1 minor round match in 1932 to qualify for the finals in 4th place. Victories over Port Adelaide by 24 points and Norwood by 26 points then provided the Blues with an opportunity for revenge over their 1931 conquerors North Adelaide in the grand final. A crowd of 29,717 saw underdogs Sturt control affairs right from the start, leading by 13, 15 and 62 points on the way to a 16.14 (110) to

10.9 victory. The win was widely attributed to White's tactical acumen in instructing his players to vary their kicking style when delivering the ball into the forward lines depending on who they were passing to. Kicks to centre half forward, for example, were executed 'grubber' style on the theory that Sturt's Alf Mussman was better on the ground than his North opponent, Sid Burton, but would have struggled to beat him in the air. Mussman was high in the Blues' best along with fellow half forwards Vic Bateman and Lance Leak, and the rucking trio of Keith Dunn, Paul Robertson and Bill Martin. Full forward Gordon 'Classy' Green revelled in the quality of service which he was accorded and bagged a grand final record tally of 9.1.¹⁷⁷

Sturt enjoyed a better home and away campaign in 1933, securing the minor premiership, but their season collapsed in the finals with successive losses to West Torrens and Norwood. The preliminary final loss to Norwood was particularly galling as the Blues managed five more scoring shots than their opponents in a low scoring game only to go under by 5 points.

Further preliminary final losses followed in 1934 (to Glenelg) and 1935 (to South Adelaide).

In South Australia's Centenary Year of 1936 the Blues were favourites for the flag after a 21.11 (137) to 13.25 (103) second semi final defeat of Port Adelaide but the Magpies had their revenge in the grand final, winning a thriller by 3 points. Sturt began as they had left off a fortnight earlier and at half time looked to be in control at 11.6 (72) to 6.8 (44). However, Port hit back strongly after the long break adding 7.11 to 3.4 to snatch a famous victory. Adding salt to the Sturt wounds, full forward 'Bo' Morton missed a kickable set shot for goal in the dying moments.

Sid White departed as Sturt coach after a 1937 season which saw the Blues miss the finals for the first time since 1929. He was replaced by Walter 'Wacka' Scott, a

¹⁷⁷ As mentioned earlier the SANFL record of 9 goals in a grand final was eventually equalled by another Sturt player, Malcolm Greenslade, in 1969.

former dual Magarey Medallist with Norwood, who latterly had been coaching without success at West Adelaide and Glenelg.¹⁷⁸ This lack of success was to continue at Unley, and after seeing the Blues finish disappointingly in 6th position twice in a row he departed to be replaced by “Bo” Morton.



“Bo” Morton

With Morton at the helm things improved dramatically with Sturt qualifying for their first grand final for four years with a 3 point second semi final defeat of Port Adelaide. A crowd of 28,050 attended the grand final to see warm favourites

¹⁷⁸Scott's coaching career had begun in the 1920s while he was still a player at Norwood and in 1929 he had steered that club to a flag.

Sturt take on South Adelaide, surprise conquerors of Port Adelaide in the preliminary final. At quarter time the Blues seemed to have one hand already firmly clutching the premiership pennant as they had eked out a 4.5 to 0.0 lead. However, South fought back strongly in the 2nd term and at the long break there was only a goal in it. Bo Morton came to the fore in the 3rd quarter kicking 3 of his side's 6 goals for the term to effectively settle matters. South outscored the Blues 5.4 to 3.6 in the final quarter but never looked like mounting a serious challenge. Sturt's best were half back flanker Norm Headon, who successfully countered South's danger man, Max Murdy, rover Gil Langley,¹⁷⁹ full forward Morton, half forward flanker Max Lowe, and centreman Bill Leak.

A week later Sturt emphasised their dominance of the game locally by defeating a combined team containing the best players from each of the other seven SANFL clubs. The future looked bright but sadly, as in 1915, the war was to intervene, arguably robbing Sturt of one or more further premierships.

In 1941, the last season before the league implemented its restricted, wartime competition,¹⁸⁰ Sturt again qualified for the grand final and looked well placed to take out another flag. However, Norwood had other ideas, and executed one of the greatest finals turn arounds in SANFL history.

Sturt defeated Norwood in the second semi final by 71 points, 22.13 (145) to 10.14 (74). Most observers believed that all they would have to do to secure the premiership a fortnight later against the same opposition was turn up at the ground for the game. Instead, the 30,742 spectators who poured into Adelaide Oval for the grand final were witnesses to a complete form reversal, with only a last quarter rally by the Blues giving some semblance of respectability to the

¹⁷⁹ Langley later went on to become a Test wicket keeper of note.

¹⁸⁰ Between 1942 and 1944 the eight SANFL clubs were paired off according to their geographical locations: Sturt formed a temporary alliance with South Adelaide with the combination managing 18 wins from 41 starts for 3rd, 4th and 3rd place finishes.

scoreline. The final scoreboard read Norwood 14.16 (100) to Sturt 10.11 (71). It was to be the Blues' last appearance in a grand final for almost a quarter of a century.

The seventeen year period from 1945 to 1961 was one of unprecedented bleakness for the Sturt Football Club (up to that point of time at any rate; it has since been comprehensively surpassed by the period 1989 to 1996 alluded to earlier). The Blues contested the finals on only five occasions during that period, which coincidentally was the same number of times they ended up with the wooden spoon. All told, Sturt won just 34.75% of all matches played, a return which would have been even poorer were it not for the outstanding individual abilities of such as triple Magarey Medallist Len Fitzgerald, Wally May, John Halbert, Clayton "Candles" Thompson, Tony Goodchild and Don Harris.

Then Oatey arrived, and a new tradition was eked out, only to erode gradually after his departure to the point where Sturt's future as an independent club seemed for a time to be in real doubt. Improvement when it finally came in 1997 must have been as unexpected to Sturt supporters as it was welcome. With former Norwood, Collingwood, Essendon and St Kilda champion Phil Carman at the coaching helm the Double Blues comfortably qualified for the finals in 4th position. Unfortunately, however, the side lacked the experience to go on with things, and lost a dour, low scoring elimination final against North Adelaide by 7 points.

Double Blues supporters would probably have seen enough in 1997 to convince them that further improvement was likely in years to come, but even they must have had to pinch themselves at times during 1998 as the side repeatedly set and then met ever more ambitious targets for itself - to win consistently, to qualify for the finals, to secure the minor premiership, to reach the grand final. Tragically, however, the final, all important target - clinching the flag - proved beyond them, as perennial grand finalist Port Adelaide proved just a little too strong, winning by 9 points in the closest grand final since 1984.

The loss to the AFL of key grand final performers such as Barnaby French (Port Adelaide) and Simon Feast (Sydney) undermined Sturt's premiership aspirations in 1999, and although the side remained competitive it slumped to 5th. Season 2000 brought slight improvement - 3rd place - but the side slipped back into the field after a woeful start in 2001. Nevertheless, the scent of success is never far from the nostrils at Unley,¹⁸¹ and in 2002 the side performed consistently well throughout the season to qualify for the finals in 3rd place with a 16-4 record. Wins over Norwood in the qualifying final (33 points) and preliminary final (49 points) subsequently earned the Blues a place in the grand final. Interspersed between these wins, however, was a 14 point 2nd semi final loss to reigning premier Central District, in light of which the Bulldogs had been securely installed as flag favourite by the time the two sides met again a fortnight later.

In front of a crowd of 35,187 on Sunday 6 October 2002 Sturt comprehensively re-established itself as a force in South Australian football with a 13.14 (92) to 6.9 (45) grand final defeat of Central District. The Double Blues took control right from the opening bounce and, with the exception of the opening twenty minutes of the 3rd term, were never seriously challenged. "Sturt were just awesome," Central skipper Daniel Healy admitted. "They just came out and were ready to go and they probably beat us at our own game.....They just shut us down. They did everything right. They played a perfect game."¹⁸²

Former South Adelaide and Adelaide utility Matthew Powell was voted best afield to become the first ever Sturt recipient of the Jack Oatey Medal, an award named in honour of arguably the greatest ever Double Blue. Powell headed a defence which seldom permitted the (on paper) most potent attacking force in the League any leeway, but there were plenty of other notable contributors, like ruckman Barnaby

¹⁸¹ After long running discussions with the local Council Sturt resumed playing regular matches at Unley Oval from 1998.

¹⁸² Quoted in 'The Advertiser', 7/10/02.

French (on 'weekend leave' from Port Adelaide), defenders Mahoney, Thurstans, Nelson and Curtis, and on ballers Chambers and Weatherald.

Sturt's victory brought to an end a premiership drought lasting twenty-six years, and many observers were quick to point out that the last time this happened (in 1966) the Double Blues went on to claim a club record five successive flags. Sadly, history was not to repeat itself on this occasion: the side dropped to 4th place in 2003, and this was followed by 3rd and 5th place finishes in 2004 and 2005. At their best, the Blues remained extremely competitive, but they lacked the consistency that distinguishes genuine premiership contenders from the chasing pack. In 2006, however, the wheels appeared to fall off completely as the side managed just 3 wins from 20 matches for the year to plummet to 8th, its worst finish for ten years. However, it would seem that this was just a temporary aberration, because in 2007 the Blues comfortably reached the finals with a 12-8 record, and although they then went down by a point against Glenelg in the elimination final, overall the signs were that the club was once again moving in the right direction, an impression reinforced to a certain extent by a solid and at times impressive 2008 campaign which ultimately yielded third place on the ladder. A year later the Blues went one better, qualifying for their first grand final since the 2002 premiership triumph over Central District. The 2009 grand final saw Sturt once again opposed by the Bulldogs, but sadly for Blues supporters the result was infinitely less satisfactory, with Centrals winning comfortably by 38 points. The 2010 season brought another finals appearance but the Blues bowed out of the premiership race at the first hurdle when they lost to the Eagles in the elimination final. There has been no further major round involvement for Sturt since, with the 2011 and 2012 seasons yielding the ultimate indignity of consecutive wooden spoons.

A Breeze For The Blues

1968 SANFL Round 15: Sturt vs. South Adelaide

The emotions of South Adelaide supporters, typically among the most turbulent and capricious anywhere, underwent even greater trauma than usual during the 1960s. When Neil Kerley was appointed as coach in 1964 the club was at rock bottom, having just procured its second wooden spoon in succession, and its seventeenth - easily a SANFL record - of the twentieth century.¹⁸³ Under Kerley's astutely fervent leadership the Panthers enjoyed a seismic reversal of fortune, winning 17 out of 20 minor round games (as compared to just 2 from 20 the previous year) to finish second on percentage to Port Adelaide heading into the finals. A narrow 2nd semi final loss to the Magpies proved to be merely a momentary hiccup as South, over the course of the ensuing fortnight, went on to procure its first flag since 1938 with emphatic wins over Sturt in the preliminary final (by 41 points) and Port in the grand final (by 27 points). The key to South's win was its ability to blend skill and aggression, unbridled power and flair, and to do so at a speed and with a precision that often left other teams grasping at shadows. As far as Kerley was concerned:

Emulating the F.N. Williams-Killigrew doctrine of getting the ball from A to B with as much brute force as possible, in as little time as possible and by the first method available is not good enough..... He (Kerley) has gone one further. He likes this power football, but he likes it done with a style and finesse. In most of

¹⁸³ At this particular point in time, Glenelg with 13 twentieth century wooden spoons, had the second most ignominious record; West Adelaide had finished bottom 10 times; Sturt 9; Norwood 4; West Torrens twice; North Adelaide once; and Port Adelaide either once or never, depending on whether you regard 1900 as falling in the nineteenth century (as people viewed it at the time), or the twentieth.

*South's triumphs.....the ball players, men like Backman, Skuse, Day and Ross, were vital.*¹⁸⁴



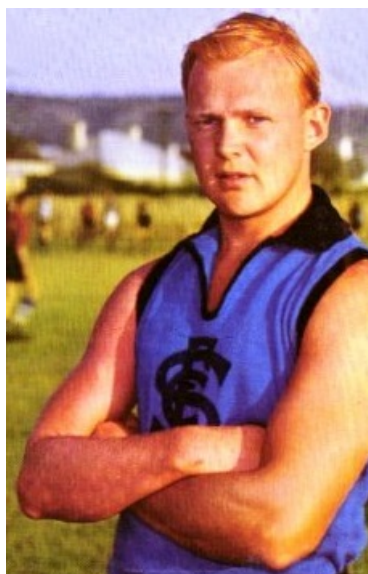
South Adelaide centre half forward Lindsay Backman marks strongly within easy goal kicking range during his team's 3rd quarter rampage. Backman kicked truly to register one of his 4 majors for the term. The other players pictured are (L-R) Darryl Hicks, 'Sandy' Nelson, Brian Norman, Bob Ball, Brenton Adcock and Terry Short.

Neil Kerley remained at the helm at South Adelaide for another couple of seasons, during which the Panthers continued to play the same sort of vibrant, high adrenalin, intermittently exhilarating football, finishing 3rd and 4th. Once Kerley departed, however, the decline was immediate and, if not quite as precipitous as the original rise had been seismic, it nevertheless heralded a perplexing and alarming time for South's supporters, who could all too readily perceive that the only major ingredient missing from the 1968 mix as compared to the previous year's was Kerley himself. At the end of the 1968 season, analysts pointed to a lack of dedication among

¹⁸⁴South Australian Football Record Yearbook 1965, page 15.

the players and a decline in club spirit as the principal reasons for the Panthers' decline,¹⁸⁵ but to all intents and purposes such an assessment merely represented another way of highlighting the absence of 'the Kerley Factor'.

At no stage during the season was that absence more starkly demonstrated than on Saturday 27th July at Unley Oval.



Sturt's dual All-Australian centre half back Rick Schoff.

Back in 1964, Sturt's supporters had found themselves in a similar position to their South Adelaide counterparts: the team they followed had recently appointed a highly respected coach with a proven track record under whose tutelage a long overdue emergence from the doldrums

¹⁸⁵ See, for instance, *South Australian Football Record Yearbook 1969*, page 39, and 'SANFL Football Budget', 28/9/68, page 28.

seemed to be occurring. Indeed, the similarities went still further, for under Jack Oatey, Sturt was rapidly developing a style of football which bore ready comparison with the Kerley formula of a quick, cohesive, flair-based game augmented by carefully controlled and precisely focused aggression. Over and above this formula, however, the Oatey approach centered heavily on - and, indeed, in the minds of many, was quintessentially characterised by - a pronounced reliance on handball as an offensive tool, to the extent that the first thing any Sturt player who gained possession normally did was to look for a potential handball recipient. The more this process became habitual and automatic over time, the better Sturt became, although it would also be fair to concede that, as other teams assimilated aspects of the Double Blues' style into their own game plans, the gap in standard narrowed. Nevertheless, for much of the 1968 season, Sturt appeared to be playing at a level or two above most of the other SANFL teams. By the time of the round 15 meeting with South Adelaide the Blues had suffered only one reversal, a 19 point loss to Port Adelaide on ANZAC Day. If they won against the Panthers they would establish a new club record of 12 successive victories.

South Adelaide went into the match in 7th position on the ladder with a 7-7 record. Under new coach Peter Darley, an immeasurably less intense character than Kerley, the Panthers had blown hot and cold, although 'the Jumbo Prince', as he was dubbed, had shown himself to possess an excellent football brain. His twin moves of centreman Lindsay Backman to centre half forward and wingman Mark Coombe to the pivot for the previous week's game against Central District had proved that, with Backman booting 5.7 and Coombe effectively 'running the show' as the side put in arguably its strongest performance for the year to win by 50 points. As a result, there was certainly no lack of confidence in the Panthers camp as they readied themselves to face the toughest task in SANFL football at the time, a trip to Unley Oval to take on reigning premiers and ladder leaders, Sturt.

Saturday 27th July was overcast but dry and mild, albeit with a formidable, near gale force northerly breeze blowing. Indeed, so substantial was the strength of that wind that, of the aggregate total of 104.133 kicked in the day's 5 SANFL matches, only 14.14 was scored into it, with Glenelg and North Adelaide (both of which won) failing to register as much as a single behind against the breeze. Significantly, it was at Unley Oval, where both teams were heavily reliant on handball, that far and away the greatest amount of success was achieved by teams kicking into the wind.

1st Quarter

Ruckman Tony Clarkson, playing in his 100th League game, was given the privilege of tossing the coin, but the honours went to South's captain-coach Peter Darley, who not surprisingly opted for first use of the formidable breeze. Despite this, it was the Double Blues who dominated the early proceedings, moving the ball around skilfully and cleverly by both hand and foot, and forcing the Panthers to Alf Skuse from his half forward flank to a loose defensive role.

Peter Endersbee notched the game's first goal after marking Keith Chessell's pass deep in a forward pocket before making light of both the angle and the breeze to split the centre in typically assured fashion.

The move of Skuse began to pay dividends for South as he repeatedly proved a foil to Sturt's aspirations, before launching the ball back towards the Panther half forward line, where Lindsay Backman and Brian Norman were beginning to get on top of Phil Nelson and Terry Short. Moreover, despite the fact that Tony Clarkson was winning most of the hit-outs, it was the South Adelaide 'crumbers' in White and Thredgold who were picking up the spills.

With the Panthers, of necessity, trying to play a more direct game, centreman Mark Coombe was frequently in the thick of the action, and he appeared to have too much pace for his opponent, Bob Shearman. By contrast, when Sturt

attacked, it was often down the wings, where Hicks and Clarke were well on top of Hendrie and Foster.

After Sturt's early dominance the remainder of the term saw South enjoy most of the possession, but a combination of resolute defence and clever counter-attacking enabled the Double Blues to remain well in touch on the scoreboard.

QUARTER TIME: South Adelaide 4.4 (28); Sturt 3.4 (22)

2nd Quarter

Other than the most one-eyed of Panther supporters, no one seriously gave South much hope of holding out against the Double Blues, whose class had clearly been evidenced by their feat of being the only team in the League to manage more than a single goal playing into the breeze in the opening term. Within moments of the re-start, however, the Panthers gave notice that they were not prepared - with due apologies for the atrocious pun - to be blown away, as Brian Norman snapped a goal to put them 12 points clear.

The Blues' response was predictably spirited as goals from Chessell and Halbert brought them level, and then Paul Bagshaw snapped truly to put them in front for the first time since early in the opening term. Almost everyone in the crowd now expected to see Sturt pulling away to secure a comfortable half time lead, but the South players had other ideas. Tackling ferociously and attacking the ball with great desperation they stemmed the tide of Sturt attacks and began to re-gain the ascendancy. Emulating the short game which the Blues had used with some success during the 1st quarter, South improved the longer the term progressed, and by the long break had recaptured the lead having registered an incredible 6.1 into the hurricane.

HALF TIME: South Adelaide 10.5 (65); Sturt 9.7 (61)

3rd Quarter

With ruckman Darley and rover White now combining to telling effect, South assumed almost complete control in this quarter. Lindsay Backman at centre half forward was also prominent; proving much too mobile for 'Sandy' Nelson, he booted 4 goals straight for the term.



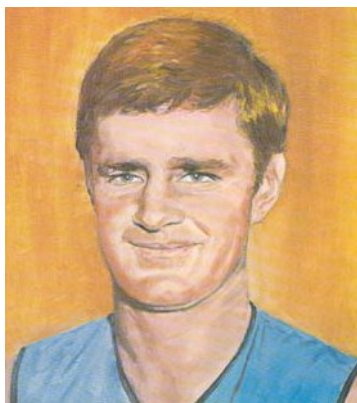
"The Jumbo Prince" - South captain-coach, Peter Darley.

Ten minutes into the quarter Sturt's problems were compounded when Paul Bagshaw, who had been a useful contributor all day, was forced to leave the fray after receiving a solid bump. He was replaced by Greg Weir.

In contrast to their cohesive, penetrative 1st quarter display, the Double Blues looked disjointed and ramshackle. On the few occasions that they did manage to get the ball into their forward lines, the South defenders, notably centre half

back Craig Cock and half back flanker Bob Schmidt, repelled the invasion with ease. The Panthers were on top both in the air, through Darley, Ball, Norman and Backman, and at ground level, where White, Thredgold and Skuse appeared to possess an extra gear compared to their Sturt opponents. By three quarter time South Adelaide, having added 6.3 to 0.1 for the term, had extended the margin to 42 points, and looked to be well on the way to victory.

THREE QUARTER TIME: South Adelaide 16.8 (104); Sturt 9.8 (62)

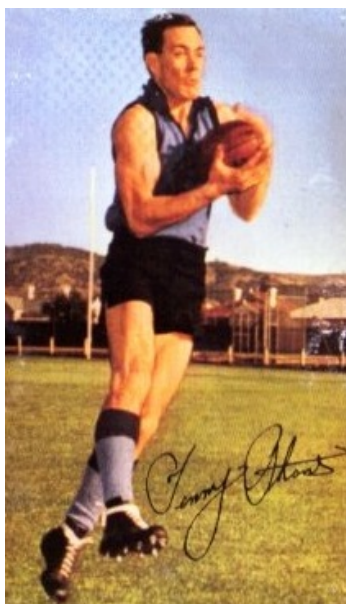


One of Sturt's greatest ever sons, Paul Bagshaw - "Mr. Magic".

4th Quarter

Right from the opening bounce of the final term it was clear that Sturt was a team on a mission. Whatever coach Jack Oatey had said to his troops over the lemon time break clearly worked as players who had hitherto scarcely been sighted suddenly found an extra yard in pace or simply began to attack both ball and man with greater desperation. Within 10 minutes of the resumption, goals to Halbert, Shearman and Schoff, coupled with a flurry of

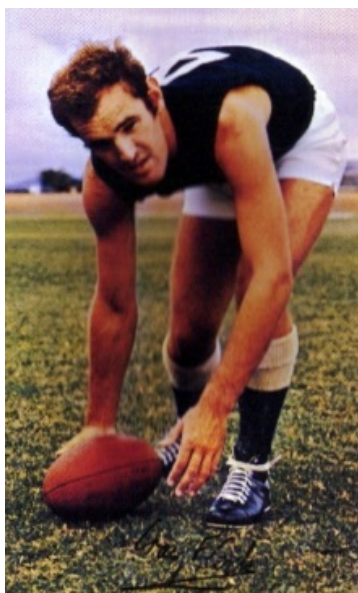
behinds, had reduced the deficit to less than 4 goals and suddenly the Unley faithful began to find their voices. Showing their inexperience perhaps, the Panthers reacted by going on the defensive, with virtually every player crowding into their defensive zone leaving them with no attacking outlets. Moreover, when endeavouring to clear the ball they repeatedly erred by heading straight down the middle of the ground rather than endeavouring to bottle play up on the 'dead', western wing.



Underrated, but never less than consummately dependable, Sturt defender Terry Short.

Suddenly, the Blues were enjoying a surfeit of possession, with players like Darryl Hicks and Bob Shearman coming into their element; time and again the Sturt centre line players and on ballers found themselves in possession of the

ball, in the clear, and with plenty of time to measure their options before unleashing another bullet like pass onto the chest of a team mate. When, as time on approached, two such passes found John Tilbrook within easy reach of goal the result, each time, was inevitable, and suddenly the scoreboard read South Adelaide 16.8 (104); Sturt 14.14 (98) - one straight kick in it.

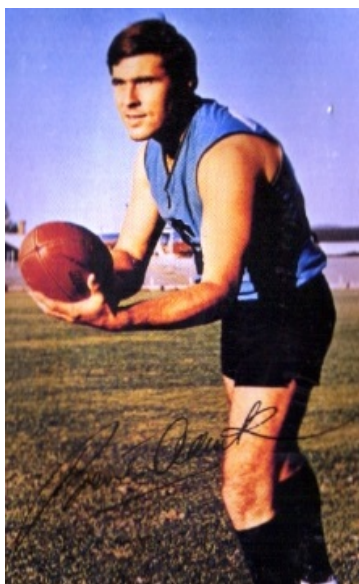


Dogged Panther defender, Craig Cock.

That “straight kick” was not long in coming as, with just three minutes left, Malcolm Greenslade got on the end of a pinpoint pass from Brenton Adcock and registered his first full pointer of the afternoon. From the ensuing centre bounce, the Panthers somehow managed to force the ball forward for just about the first time in the quarter, eliciting enormous - and voluble - excitement from their cheer squad behind the goals. After a series of short kicks the ball reached the South goal

square only for indecision to set in as the only two Panther players in the area simultaneously left the ball to one another. Sturt was able to clear, and two kicks and scarcely that many seconds later the ball nestled in the arms of Double Blues skipper, John Halbert, whose prodigious goal-bound kick from centre half forward scudded off hands and through for a minor score. A minute or so later the siren sounded, with no addition to the score; the Blues had scored their 3rd 1 point victory in just over a month,¹⁸⁶ and the Panther fans could scarcely believe it.

FINAL SCORE: Sturt 15.15 (105); South Adelaide 16.8 (104)



Sturt's indomitable back pocket, Brenton Adcock.

¹⁸⁶ The previous 1 point wins, both of which had been secured in highly controversial circumstances, had been against Port Adelaide and Glenelg.

Postscript

Sturt went on to extend its record-breaking winning sequence to 13 games before lowering its colours to Port Adelaide in round 17 at Alberton; two years later it set a new, and as yet unsurpassed landmark, when it won a total of 16 consecutive games. In 1968, the round 17 loss to Port was the Double Blues' last for the season.



Sturt centreman Bob Shearman marks in front of South rover Alan White. Peter Endersbee (no. 29) and Peter Darley are late arrivals on the scene.

South Adelaide's capricious run continued, with comfortable wins over Glenelg and Woodville being counterbalanced by inept displays against West Torrens and North Adelaide. The Panthers finally finished the season in 6th place, which was at once their worst showing since 1963, and would prove to be their best for a decade. Peter Darley's

reign as coach came to an end after successive wooden spoons in 1969 and 1970, and it was not until the arrival of the 'little master', Haydn Bunton junior, in 1975 that the club began to turn things around.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Sturt	3.4	9.7	9.8	15.15	105
South Adelaide	4.4	10.5	16.8	16.8	104

BEST - Sturt: Chessell, Hicks, Clarkson, Halbert, Adcock, Murphy, Schoff, Tilbrook **South Adelaide:** Backman, Thredgold, Darley, Norman, Skuse, Coombe, Ball, White

SCORERS - Sturt: Halbert 4.1; Shearman, Tilbrook 2.2; Chessell, Endersbee, Greenslade, Rigney, Schoff 1.1; Bagshaw, Murphy 1.0; Clarkson 0.2; Adcock, Weir 0.1; rushed 0.1 **South Adelaide:** Backman 6.0; Thredgold 3.3; Norman 3.1; Coombe, White 1.1; Hendrie, Jones 1.0; Ball 0.1; rushed 0.1

ATTENDANCE: 8,538 at Unley Oval (the average attendance per game at Unley in 1968 was 11,004)

Double Header Blues Do For Port

1968 SANFL Round 19: Sturt vs. Port Adelaide

In Australian football, the winning culture has acquired such primacy that it has become all too easy to lose sight of the fact that there are occasions when losing can actually be beneficial. Conversely, winning is not always what it seems.

During the 1980s, public apathy and increased direct competition with the VFL were having a significant negative impact on crowds, the SANFL began programming 'double header' fixtures at Football Park. In 1988, the success of these matches reached their peak, with an all-time record

SANFL minor round crowd of 38,213 attending the round 19 double header which featured 2nd placed Port Adelaide against 4th placed Sturt, and ladder leaders Central District against 6th placed reigning premiers North Adelaide. The possible permutations were intriguing: had both Port and North emerged victorious, they would have displaced Centrals and Sturt on the ladder respectively. Conversely, wins for the Bulldogs and the Blues would, in the former's case, effectively shore up the minor premiership, and in the case of Sturt make it well-nigh certain that the club would contest the 1988 finals series.



Action from early in the match as Port Adelaide rookie Mark Warton marks safely in front of Sturt's Greg Whittlesea.

In the case of the Sturt-Port Adelaide encounter, however, it is possible to argue that the actual winners and losers were not the ones appearing on the scoreboard at the end of the match. If this strikes you as a preposterous or contentious assertion, read on.

1st Quarter

On a warm, sunny, spring-like afternoon there are probably in excess of 20,000 spectators already in the stadium as the first game of the double header, featuring Port Adelaide and Sturt, gets underway. As the match progresses, these numbers swell steadily, with more than 30,000 fans being witness to the game's gripping and extraordinary climax.

Sturt captain Greg Whittlesea wins the toss and opts to kick to the southern end of Football Park, with first use of what the Channel 10 TV commentators describe as "a 3 to 4 goal breeze".

2 mins Carl Dilella accepts Scott Russell's pass on the left forward point of the centre square and runs on some 5 metres before sending a high kick in the direction of centre half forward. A pack comprising some half a dozen players contests the mark only for the ball to spill loose to David Wark, who turns quickly and spears a low kick through the vacant goal square and over the goal line for full points. **Sturt 1.0; Port Adelaide 0.0**

5 mins From a boundary throw-in in Sturt's right forward pocket Port ruckman Russell Johnston wins the tap but the ball goes straight to John Paynter, who runs on towards goal before being met heavily by Martin Leslie. Paynter nevertheless just manages to get boot to ball and it rolls goalwards some 5 metres before being collected by Wark. The Sturt full forward is also assailed by Leslie, but he too manages to squeeze out a kick which, fortuitously for the Double Blues, trickles through for a goal. **Sturt 2.0; Port Adelaide 0.0**

7 mins With the ball at centre half forward for Port Adelaide, Richard Foster metes out a formidable hip and shoulder bump which prevents Heinrich from gaining possession and allows Leslie to collect before handballing on to Robbie Kerr. The former East Fremantle rover darts on and fires off a shot towards goal which holds up in the breeze and comes down just a metre or so from the goal line where David Hynes manages to palm it in the direction of Scott Hodges. Running

positions the Port full back and takes a seemingly comfortable mark on the chest before converting from less than 30 metres out directly in front. **Sturt 4.7; Port Adelaide 1.0**

23 mins As the Magpies enjoy their first concerted spell of attacking pressure of the game Greg Whittlesea endeavours to relieve the pressure with a long clearing kick from deep in the left back pocket which travels to midway between half back left and left centre wing. Soaring high over the inevitable awaiting pack, Port ruckman David Hynes skilfully taps the ball to rover Tim Ginever, who steers a kick into space in the Magpies' right forward pocket. First to reach the ball is Rohan Smith, who has just entered the fray as a replacement for pulled hamstring victim George Fiacchi, but no sooner has Smith gathered possession than he is bundled to the ground by Bruce Lennon. Umpire Laurie Argent is right on hand to rule that Lennon has pushed the Port man in the back and, from the resultant free kick, the livewire half forward specialist lives up to his reputation as a deadly kick for goal by nonchalantly splitting the centre. **Sturt 4.7; Port Adelaide**

2.2

27 mins Dilena, running goalwards along right centre wing, receives a classic 'hospital handball' from Paynter, and is immediately and fiercely met, front on, by Port ruckman Russell Johnston, whereupon the Sturt rover collapses motionless to the ground. Players from both teams rapidly converge on the area and much jostling and posturing ensues. Meanwhile, the forlorn, stretcher-bound figure of Carl Dilena, who had already had one extended spell in the hands of the trainers after being flattened by Martin Leslie, is ferried from the ground.

A couple of minutes later, as Abernethy's seemingly goal bound shot is arrested by the breeze, and falls harmlessly into the waiting arms of David Welsby, the siren sounds to end a quarter which, apart from the closing 6 or 7 minutes, has been almost totally dominated by a pacy, determined and impressively cohesive Double Blues combination.

QUARTER TIME: Sturt 4.7 (31); Port Adelaide 2.2 (14)

2nd Quarter

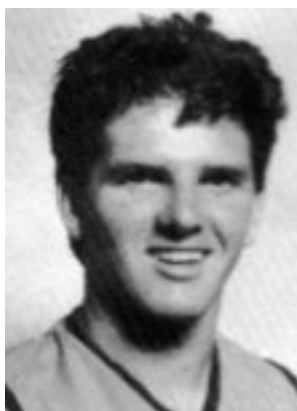
3 mins Stephen Williams is in possession of the ball between right centre wing and half forward right and has sufficient time and space to measure his options before sending a high centering kick towards centre half forward, where Jon Simpson, perched high on the back of Sturt ruckman Damian Kitschke, takes a veritable screamer. From 40 metres out, directly in front, he effortlessly goals with an elegant drop punt. **Sturt 4.7; Port Adelaide 3.3**

5 mins A torrid, frenetic passage of play, during which the ball remains at or around the centre half forward position for Port Adelaide for over a minute, with players from both sides throwing their bodies at both the ball and each other with fearless abandon, is finally broken open by David Hynes crashing through a wall of players to gain possession and almost simultaneously squeeze out a handball to Tim Ginever. The future Magpie skipper just has time to throw the ball onto his left foot and propel it forward some 20 metres, right onto the chest of the waiting Darren Smith, who duly converts. **Sturt 4.7; Port Adelaide 4.3**

6 mins The boundary umpire throws the ball back into play at half back left for Port Adelaide, and Abernethy rises high to out-reach both ruckmen, grab the ball cleanly, and fire off a handball to the running Simpson. After dashing on his full measure, Simpson handballs in field to Stephen Williams who, from just inside the centre square, sinks his boot into a prodigious, towering drop punt that bounces a metre from the goal line and then over for a morale-boosting 6 pointer. **Port Adelaide 5.3; Sturt 4.7**

10 mins Kitschke is awarded a free kick for tripping against Rohan Smith and, from half forward right, looks for his ruck partner Reynolds in the right forward pocket. Reynolds indeed manages to get a hand to the ball, but is unable to hold on to it, and it bounces clear to David Ey. With no opposition players in his immediate vicinity, Ey has time to look up, take stock, and hit David Wark on the chest with a

perfect foot pass. From 35 metres out on the slightest of angles, Wark looks odds on to convert, but his kick holds up in the breeze, and the ball is contested by a pack of players just in front of the goal line before spilling off hands to Kitschke, front and centre, whose clever snap over his head goes straight through the centre. **Sturt 5.8; Port Adelaide 5.4**



Scott Russell of Sturt.

11 mins Straight from the ensuing centre bounce David Ey, having been freed for an over the shoulder tackle, pinpoints Whittlesea at half forward right and the eventual 1988 Magarey Medallist marks cleanly before playing on and launching a hefty kick in the direction of the goal square. Somewhat surprisingly, no one from either team manages to get hands to the ball, which bounces about 10 metres from goal and, as Wark applies the perfect shepherd on Delaney, Kitschke has the easiest of tasks to run in, sweep up the ball, and dash into an open goal to register his 2nd 6 pointer in a minute. **Sturt 6.8; Port Adelaide 5.4**

13 mins Kerr, in the right back pocket for Port Adelaide, soccers the ball ahead of himself in the direction of the

boundary line, but instead of letting it cross over he puts a hand on it to trap it. This enables Paynter to swoop in, snatch the ball away, and steer a low centering kick towards full forward where Kitschke takes an easy chest mark. A bare 20 metres from goal, straight in front, the Sturt giant never looks like missing. With 3 goals already into a formidable breeze, the Double Blues are threatening to take the game out of Port's reach. **Sturt 7.8; Port Adelaide 5.4**



Port's Darren Smith.

15 mins Stephen Williams, having marked near the centre circle, unloads another prodigious kick in the direction of full forward where Scott Hodges is seemingly ideally placed to mark, only to allow the ball to slip through his grasp, and spin away in the direction of the right forward pocket boundary. Just before the ball goes over the line, Russell Johnston

intercepts it, and handballs in field to Foster, whose high, centering kick is contested by a pack of 4 players in the goal square, before spilling loose. Russell Johnston, who has been following the flight of the ball, finds himself ideally placed to scoop it up and, while the players comprising the pack are still regaining their bearings, he sprints to the goal line and prods the ball over with his left foot. **Sturt 7.8; Port Adelaide 6.4**

18 mins Delaney's kick in after a Sturt behind almost reaches left centre wing and Simpson, using his direct opponent Scott Russell as a step ladder, marks brilliantly before playing on and sending a mistimed torpedo punt some 45 metres forward where Darren Smith takes a 2 grab mark before off-loading to Foster. With space to run on, Foster does precisely that before kicking truly from about 50 metres.¹⁸⁷ **Sturt 7.9; Port Adelaide 7.5**

20 mins At a boundary throw-in deep in the right forward pocket for Port Adelaide Johnston gets high above Reynolds and briefly manages to get both hands to the ball only for it to slip through his fingers and bounce away to Abernethy who, from 20 metres out on the slightest of angles, claims full points with a well-judged left foot snap. **Port Adelaide 8.5; Sturt 7.9**

26 mins Welsby's ill-directed clearing kick from centre half back is intercepted by Simpson right on the centre circle, and the Port wingman promptly unloads a towering torpedo punt which Scott Hodges, at full stretch, manages to mark just inside the boundary line adjacent to the left point post. After taking at least 30 seconds to measure his options, Hodges eventually does the predictable thing by running around to improve the angle and meticulously steering home the Magpies' 9th goal. **Port Adelaide 9.6; Sturt 7.9**

28 mins In a near carbon copy of the previous goal, albeit at the opposite end of the ground this time, Greg Phillips' hurried relieving kick from midway between centre half back

¹⁸⁷ The SANFL, remaining in line with the NFL, had yet to introduce the 50 metre arc.

and half back left travels only as far as Darryl Smith who, having marked easily on the chest, sends a high torpedo punt deep into the right forward pocket where Wark, unattended, holds the grab, before bringing the Blues to within less than a straight kick. **Port Adelaide 9.6; Sturt 8.9**



Port's Simon Tregenza and Sturt's Peter Reid contest a mark.

30 mins Having spoiled Laurence Schache's attempt to mark near the centre circle, Greg Phillips runs on, pushes Paynter off the ball, collects, and feeds off by hand to Leslie, who promptly returns it on the double play. Phillips then fires off another handball to Tregenza, whose quick kick forward elicits a marking contest at centre half forward which sees the ball spill off hands in the direction of the right forward pocket. Astonishingly, the only player in this vicinity is Scott Hodges who, having snatched up the ball, has plenty of time to take

careful aim and coolly register his 2nd goal of the quarter and of the game. **Port Adelaide 10.6; Sturt 8.9**

32 mins Sturt's Carl Dilella makes a surprise return to the fray and, within moments, finds himself flat on his back once more courtesy of a hefty bump, ruled illegal by umpire Argent, from Jon Simpson. As Dilella totters to his feet ready to take his free kick the siren sounds to bring the first half of the match to an end.

HALF TIME: Port Adelaide 10.6 (66); Sturt 8.9 (57)

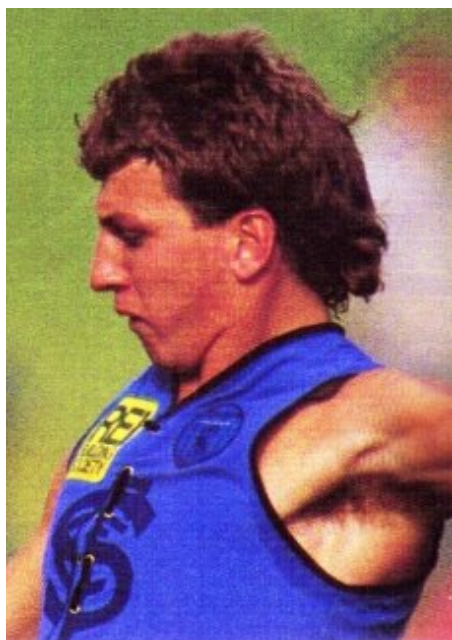
3rd Quarter

4 mins A boundary throw-in takes place at half forward left for the Blues and Damian Kitchke palms the ball into the middle of a pack of players. Crashing through the pack, Scott Russell manages to grab the ball before breaking clear and kicking truly from a distance of 40 metres on a 60 degree angle. **Port Adelaide 10.7; Sturt 9.9**

7 mins Delaney, bringing the ball back into play after a Sturt behind, looks for Harrison at half back left. His kick misses the body, but Harrison just manages to prevent the ball from going out of play before sending an awkward looking tumble punt in the direction of left centre wing. Sturt's Underwood manages to trap the ball whereupon Harrison, who has chased his kick up field, attempts to soccer it out of the Sturt player's hands, conceding a free for kicking in danger in the process. Underwood quickly plays on with a pass to Wark, who marks deep in the right forward pocket before being foolishly flung to the ground by Phelps. The inevitable 15 metre penalty brings the Sturt man to within easy range of goal and he duly converts. **Sturt 10.10; Port Adelaide 10.8**

12 mins Delaney's kick in after a Sturt behind is horrendously wayward and travels out of bounds on the full in the left back pocket a mere 30 metres along from the behind post. Andrew Underwood inflicts the maximum punishment with a superbly judged checkside goal. **Sturt 11.12; Port Adelaide 10.9**

17 mins Mark Warton, under considerable duress in Port's right back pocket, throws the ball blindly on to his boot, only to see it sail out of bounds on the full at half back right. Scott Russell takes the ensuing free kick quickly and finds Darryl Smith, unmarked, 40 metres from goal on a 45 degree angle, and the Sturt veteran has no difficulty in extending his side's lead to 15 points. **Sturt 12.12; Port Adelaide 10.9**



Phil Heinrich (Sturt)

19 mins Tim Ginever takes a strong defensive mark at half back right and floats a kick in the direction of David Hynes near the centre of the ground. Hynes has to stretch, but manages to hold on to a finger-tip mark before sending a probing kick towards centre half forward where Scott Hodges, who for once has managed to elude the attentions of David

Welsby, marks cleanly overhead. From just over 40 metres out, more or less straight in front, the Magpie goalsneak makes no mistake. **Sturt 12.12; Port Adelaide 11.9**

24 mins Darryl Smith, having won a free kick against Phil Harrison for holding the ball on left centre wing, kicks towards centre half forward where Scott Russell and Mark Warton contest. Russell briefly gets both hands to the ball, only to drop it under pressure from Warton. However, the umpire rules that Warton has illegally interfered with the Sturt man, who coolly steers the ball home to push the margin out to 16 points. **Sturt 13.13; Port Adelaide 11.9**

The Magpies add a behind shortly afterwards, which proves to be the last score of a term in which the Double Blues' overall superiority has arguably not been adequately reflected on the scoreboard. The Channel 10 commentary team are of the unanimous view that Port Adelaide, which will be coming home with the aid of the still appreciable breeze, are in the proverbial "box seat".

THREE QUARTER TIME: Sturt 13.13 (91); Port Adelaide 11.10 (76)

4th Quarter

1 min After Sturt win the initial centre clearance of the final term, Laurence Schache at centre half forward is controversially awarded a mark after seeming to dive forward and trap the ball midway between half forward left and centre half forward for the Blues. Schache passes to Scott Russell, who eludes Warton before handballing to Whittlesea, and the Sturt skipper, with his 20th kick of the game, snaps accurately from deep in the left forward pocket. **Sturt 14.13; Port Adelaide 11.10**

7 mins Russell Johnston wins the tap at a boundary throw-in on left centre wing for the Magpies, and skilfully directs the ball to Simon Tregenza. The teenaged wingman initiates a chain of handballs involving Stephen Williams, Greg Boyd, Richard Foster and finally Jon Simpson, who runs on, taking a

bounce, before kicking truly from a distance of about 50 metres. **Sturt 14.14; Port Adelaide 12.11**

8 mins At the ensuing centre bounce, Reynolds thumps the ball 15 metres forward but it is intercepted by Williams who is promptly taken high by Scott Russell and awarded a free kick. Williams' high torpedo punt goes toward half forward left where Darren Smith has found space, and marks comfortably, before playing on and kicking in the direction of the goal square. One on one with Welsby, Port full forward Hodges arrests the progress of the ball with his right hand before diving headlong and completing a remarkable grab. There is no anti-climax either as he nonchalantly steers the ball home for his 4th major. **Sturt 14.14; Port Adelaide 13.11**

9 mins Bruce Abernethy misses an easy left foot snapshot from barely 20 metres out.

12 mins At a boundary throw-in on left centre wing for Port, Darren Smith leaps high over both ruckmen and catches the ball on the full before handballing to Greg Boyd, who knocks it into space in front of Tregenza. The Port wingman dashes on his full measure before sending a low trajectory drop punt towards full forward where Hodges and Welsby engage in an indeterminate aerial contest, with the ball spilling to ground. A frantic scrimmage ensues with no player from either team able to secure a clean possession until David Hynes, with strong use of the body, clears a path for himself, snatches up the ball and, receiving a call from Rohan Smith 10 metres to his left, fires off a handball just in front of that player enabling him to gather possession without breaking stride and snap truly with his left foot from 20 metres out straight in front.

Sturt 14.14; Port Adelaide 14.13

14 mins Russell Johnston wins the tap at a boundary throw-in on Sturt's left half forward flank. He endeavours to steer the ball in the direction of Roger Delaney, but David Ey anticipates brilliantly and intercepts before sending a low, left foot centering kick towards full forward. David Wark has front position and makes a diving attempt to mark, only to see the ball bounce off his chest into space. Fortunately for the Double Blues, the first player upon it is Scott Field, and before

any opposition player can intervene he has thrown the ball onto his boot and sent it right through the centre to give his side some invaluable breathing space. **Sturt 15.14; Port Adelaide 14.13**

18 mins Another wayward snap from Abernethy causes coach Cahill to drag the former Collingwood and North Melbourne player from the ground.

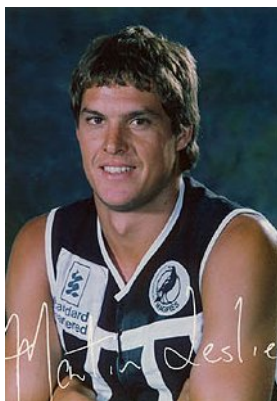


Sturt's Greg Whittlesea pictured with the 1988 Magarey Medal.

21 mins David Welsby takes a free kick for out of bounds on the full immediately adjacent to Port Adelaide's right behind post. His kick to half back right elicits a marking contest which sees David Hynes get higher off the ground

than anyone else, only to allow the ball to slip through his hands, and go to ground to the rear of the pack. Tim Ginever promptly gathers the crumbs and sends a high, speculative kick towards the goal square where Scott Hodges, having again managed to get in front of David Welsby, marks strongly overhead. From near point blank range the Magpie spearhead is never going to miss. **Sturt 15.15; Port Adelaide 15.14**

29 mins Deep in the right forward pocket Simon Tregenza is flung to the ground while in the act of kicking for goal, forcing his shot off line for a minor score. **Sturt 15.16; Port Adelaide 15.15**



The Magpies' Martin Leslie.

Approximately a minute later, with the ball being vigorously disputed on right centre wing for Sturt, the siren sounds, and Merv Keane on the Sturt bench leaps to his feet and punches the air in triumph. The Double Blues players embrace each other delightedly, while the disconsolate Port Adelaide team troops from the ground to a chorus of catcalls, whistles and colourfully phrased abuse. **FINAL SCORE: Sturt 15.16 (106); Port Adelaide 15.15 (105)**

28 mins David Ey registers a behind to extend Sturt's lead to 2 points. **Sturt 15.16; Port Adelaide 15.14**

When, in the second game of the double header, Central District helpfully overcame North Adelaide by 45 points, the Double Blues were effectively assured of competing in the 1988 major round, thereby redoubling their delight. However, over the remaining 3 weeks of the 1988 minor round, whether because of complacency or false confidence, or a combination of the two, the form of both of the double header victors deteriorated alarmingly. Sturt managed just 1 win, against a woeful South Adelaide side which would finish the season with just a solitary victory and a pitiable percentage of 32.3. The Blues' other 2 games, against Norwood and Glenelg, were lost by margins of 61 and 90 points respectively. Meanwhile, Centrals lost badly to both Woodville and Port Adelaide, before recovering marginally to secure a lack lustre win over West Torrens in the final round. After being many pundits' tip for the premiership until late in the season, the Bulldogs went on to complete their fall from grace in spectacular fashion with straight sets finals losses to Glenelg and Norwood. As for the Double Blues, they followed their inept round 22 showing against the Bays by effectively kicking themselves out of contention the following week against the same opponents in the elimination final. At quarter time Sturt had managed 8 scoring shots to Glenelg's 5, but trailed by 17 points; at the long break it was 14 scoring shots to 12, and a 28 point deficit; and by the final change the match was as good as over as the Tigers, with 16 scoring shots (12.4) led the Blues with 17 scoring shots (2.15) by 49 points. 'Bad kicking is bad football' runs the old adage, and ultimately Sturt, with greater use of the ball and more attacking possession than the Bays, could have no complaints about an eventual 59 point hiding.

Even more tragically for Sturt, the controversial departure of coach Mervyn Keane at season's end precipitated a decade of demoralising under-achievement on a scale never equalled, before or since, in the entire history of the SANFL. Whatever the ostensible reasons for the Sturt

committee's decision to replace Keane with unproven former champion Rick Davies, it is almost impossible, in hindsight, to avoid arriving at the conclusion that it represented a substantial and indeed almost fatal shot in the foot for the club. Under Davies, the Blues would manage just 4 wins in 1989, which would consign the club to its first wooden spoon since 1961, but by no means the last for some appreciable time.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Sturt	4.7	8.9	13.13	15.16	106
Port Adelaide	2.2	10.6	11.10	15.15	105

BEST - Sturt: Whittlesea, Paynter, Smith, S.Russell, Kitschke, Wark **Port Adelaide:** Leslie, Simpson, Phillips, Johnston, Williams, Hodges

GOALS - Sturt: Wark 5; Kitschke 3; S.Russell 2; Field, Paynter, Smith, Underwood, Whittlesea **Port Adelaide:** Hodges 5; Foster, Simpson, R.Smith 2; Abernethy, Johnston, D.Smith, Williams

ATTENDANCE: 38,212 at Football Park (double header)

VICTORIAN (North Adelaide)

Home Ground: Montefiore Hill

Formed: Early 1870s - precise date uncertain; changed name to North Adelaide in 1883

Colours: Orange and black

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

Based in North Adelaide, Victorian played its home matches at Montefiore Hill, while its committee met at the Thistle Hotel on Kermode Street. Despite the club's name, it was not formed by expatriates from across the border, and neither did it boast an abundance of Victorian players. Indeed, it was a staunchly South Australian club, which in matches against Norwood - a club which did boast a surfeit of Victorian players - tended to see itself as upholding the honour of the colony.

Prior to the establishment of the SAFA in 1877, Victorian was one of several clubs which favoured the use of a round ball. The team was renowned for its slick inter-passing based around the eventually to be outlawed 'little mark'. In order to counter any allegations of throwing, players were instructed to drop kick the ball where possible, but other teams were much less honourable, operating on the principle that "if you got away with it, it was fair".

For most of its initial eight season stint in the SAFA Victorian could be regarded as a leading team. It finished second behind South Adelaide in 1877, and was runner-up again in 1880, this time to Norwood, having inflicted that club's first ever defeat in September of that season.

After adopting the name of the locality in which it was based, North Adelaide, the team's on-field performances declined markedly, and it finished bottom of the list in both of the final two seasons. The present day North Adelaide Football Club which was to emerge out of the Medindie Football Club in 1893, was a completely new entity which bore no relationship to Victorian.

WEST ADELAIDE - original

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

The original West Adelaide Football Club was admitted to the SAFA in 1887, along with Gawler. The arrival of the two newcomers brought the number of senior clubs in the Association to seven. However, West Adelaide struggled to compete, and after a dismal season which saw it finish last it either withdrew, or was expelled, from the competition. The club bore no relation to today's West Adelaide Football Club, which gained entry to the SAFA in 1897 and has maintained continuous membership ever since.

WEST ADELAIDE

Club Address: P.O. Box 164, Marlestone , South Australia 5033

Website: www.westadelaidefc.com.au

Home Ground: City Mazda Stadium (originally known as Richmond Oval)

Formed: 1892

Colours: Black and red

Emblem: Bloods

Senior Grade Premierships: 1908-09, 1911-12, 1927, 1947, 1961, 1983 (8 total)

Other Premierships: Adelaide and Suburban Association 1895-96 (2 total); Championship of Australia 1908 & 1911 (2 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1955, 1957, 1960, 1962, 1985, 1987 (6 total); Foxtel Cup 2013 (1 total)

Magarey Medallists: James 'Sorry' Tierney 1908; Henry 'Dick' Head 1909; Robert Barnes 1922; H.Bruce McGregor 1926 & 1927; Robert Snell 1929; Jack Sexton 1931; Ray McArthur 1939*; Ron Benton 1957; Ken Eustice 1962; Trevor Grimwood 1977; Grantley Fielke 1985; Glenn Kilpatrick 1995; James Ezard 2009 (13 Medallists/14 Medals)

All Australians: Jack Lynch 1953; Stan Costello 1956; Neil Kerley 1961; Don Roach 1961; Robert Day 1966; Geoff Morris 1979; Craig Williams 1983 (7 total)

League Top Goalkickers: F.Fitzgerald (31) 1915; P.Phipps (90) 1957; A.Richardson (85) 1998, (66) 1999, (72) 2000 & (84) 2001; D.Bradshaw (97) 2003 (7 total)

Highest Score: 36.21 (237) vs. West Torrens 16.5 (101) at Richmond Oval in round 8 1982

Most Games: 364 by Grantley Fielke from 1979 to 1997

Record Home Attendance: 15,742 in round 5 1969: Glenelg 18.18 (126); West Adelaide 8.9 (57)

Record Finals Attendance: 54,282 for 1958 grand final at Adelaide Oval: Port Adelaide 14.10 (94); West Adelaide 14.8 (92)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by the SANFL in 1998*

With the exception of one all too brief halcyon era between 1908 and 1912 West Adelaide has never been consistently successful but there can be few clubs with so colourful and dramatic a history. More to the point, it is doubtful whether any other club in Australia has managed so regularly and with such consummate effectiveness to shoot itself in the foot.

Despite the fact that a club bearing the name West Adelaide appeared in the SAFA as early as 1887 it was not until 1892 that the present club of that name was formed. Between 1892 and 1894 the side was administered on a very informal basis and only took part in scratch matches. However, by 1895 club spirit and organisation had developed to such an extent that entry into an official competition was sought and secured. During two seasons as members of the Adelaide and Suburban Association West acquired a firm reputation as the strongest club outside senior ranks in the city. Consequently its admission to the SAFA surprised no one.

Unfortunately for West, however, the gap in standard between junior and senior football was considerable. In 1897 and 1898 the club played a total of 31 matches for just a single win and a draw. Many of the defeats were sizeable.



James "Sorry" Tierney.

In 1899 the SAFA implemented district or 'electorate' football whereby players were obliged to play for the clubs from the electoral districts in which they resided. Many expected this to have a salutary effect on a struggling club like West, but while the competition as a whole evened out, the black and reds remained very much the Cinderella side of South Australian football. Even Sturt, which did not enter the SAFA until 1901, proved more competitive than West, reaching the finals for the first time in only their sixth season. At the beginning of the 1908 season, after eleven years in the competition, West had managed just 20 wins and 2 draws

from 127 matches, which represents a paltry success rate of less than 17%. Conditions off the field did not exactly help. The club's training ground in the west park lands was a rough and ready affair bisected by a cattle track, while the players were forced to change and wash in a wooden and iron shed possessing no hot water facility. Clubrooms were an unimaginable luxury, and home matches were shared between the Adelaide and Jubilee Ovals.

On the positive side of the ledger the club unearthed a succession of champion players during the early to middle years of the century's first decade. Prominent among these were Tom Leahy, the 'prince of ruckmen', who would go on to win a Magarey Medal with North Adelaide in 1913, his brother Bernie, a redoubtable backman, follower James 'Sorry' Tierney, and centreman Henry 'Dick' Head - the last two of whom were West's first ever Magarey Medallists, in 1908 and 1909 respectively.

In 1908 these champions and others combined to produce a season the like of which West supporters had never previously seen, and which indeed they would seldom if ever witness again. After qualifying for the finals for the first ever time the black and reds ousted North Adelaide from premiership contention in a semi final by 15 points and then surprised everyone by trouncing minor premiers Norwood 6.15 (51) to 3.6 (24) in the final. The Redlegs exercised their right of challenge the following week and 22,000 spectators saw a much harder fought affair with West scraping home by 3 points, 7.10 (52) to 6.13 (49).

VFL premiers Carlton then challenged West to a play off for the 'Championship of the Commonwealth', a challenge which West were quick to accept. The match took place at Adelaide Oval in front of a crowd of 13,000, most of whom would have been surprised to see West win, let alone so emphatically. Final scores were West Adelaide 12.9 (81) to Carlton 7.10 (52). Best afield was West rover 'Shrimp' Dowling, with team mates Tom Leahy, Tierney, Bruce and Horgan also outstanding. A contemporary account used the following words to describe West's triumph:

*The success of West Adelaide can be summed up in one word - system..... The men kept their places, the shepherding was excellent, the ruck first class, and the kicking was good. In only one department of the game did Carlton excel, and that was in high marking..... West Adelaide worked like a piece of well-oiled machinery, and they achieved a victory of which not only the club and their thousands of loyal supporters but the whole state feel justly proud.*¹⁸⁸

The 1909 season proved to be almost as good. After finishing the minor round in 3rd position West were in indefatigable form during the finals downing West Torrens 7.18 (60) to 3.7 (25) in a semi final, Norwood 8.18 (66) to 5.8 (38) in the final, and minor premiers Port Adelaide in the challenge final 7.17 (59) to 6.5 (41) in front of 25,000 spectators. If there could be any criticism levelled at West's performances it was that they had failed sufficiently to translate their general superiority into goals; at the end of the day though, at least as far as the SAFL finals were concerned, this did not really matter as the black and reds were comfortably superior, but a few weeks later in the Championship of Australia match it proved to be West's undoing.

Unusually, the 1909 Championship of Australia play off took place in Melbourne, an indication perhaps of the greater respect which Victorians were developing for South Australian football, a respect based partly on West Adelaide's memorable victory over Carlton the previous year. This time, however, there was to be no repetition, West going down to South Melbourne by 24 points, 6.14 (50) to 11.8 (74). West had at least as much of the general play as their opponents, but just as in the SANFL finals poor kicking for goal let them down.

After losing eight players from their premiership side of the previous year West slipped down the list to 5th in 1910.

¹⁸⁸ Contemporary account quoted in *Bloods, Sweat and Tears* by Merv Agars, pages 6-7.

This proved to be just a temporary hiccup, however, for in 1911 the side was back to its best, winning the first 10 games of the season, and ultimately qualifying for the finals comfortably in 2nd position. A 21 point semi final win over Sturt followed, with minor premiers Port Adelaide being bundled aside by 3 goals a fortnight later in the final. The challenge final saw Port providing more resolute opposition, but West ultimately got home by 5 points thanks to a late goal from skipper, Jos Dailey.

VFL premiers Essendon were West's next opponents in the Championship of Australia play off. Held at Adelaide Oval, the match attracted a disappointing crowd of just 6,000 spectators, but those who stayed away missed an enthralling contest. For most of the day there was little between the sides, and the result could easily have gone either way. Ultimately though it was West who had their noses in front at the final bell by just 3 points. Final scores were West Adelaide 8.9 (57) to Essendon 7.12 (54). Dowling, Alec Conlin, Hele, Dailey and Head were among the best for the home side.

An interesting consequence of West's twin triumphs in 1911 was a decision by the South Australian Brewing Company Ltd. to adopt red and black as the colours on the labels and bottle tops of its West End beer, a practice which continues to this day. (In the immediate wake of this innovation West began somewhat quaintly to be referred to as the bottle tops, a practice which, not surprisingly, did not endure for quite so long.)

It was a case of history repeating itself in 1912 as West thrashed Sturt in a semi final and then twice accounted for minor premiers Port Adelaide to take out the flag. The challenge final, which West won 6.10 (46) to 5.2 (32), was watched by a South Australian record crowd of 28,500. Dick Head, the 'king of centremen', was best afield.

West were disappointed when negotiations with VFL premiers Essendon to hold a Championship of Australia game fell through; in the opinion of most associated with the club, West's 1912 side was superior in many respects to that of the

previous year, and victory in such a game could confidently have been anticipated.



Johnny Taylor, who made his West Adelaide debut in 1936, and who would captain the club to its 1947 premiership, takes a one hander.

As intimated at the outset, the period 1908 to 1912 remains far and away the most auspicious in West Adelaide's history, and the fall from grace was to be unaccountably swift.

Between 1913 and 1921 (and excluding the years 1916-18 when the competition went into mothballs because of the war) the black and reds won only 30 and drew 3 of 80 matches, reaching the finals just twice. It was almost as though the club's five years of glory had never happened.

Improvement came as suddenly as the deterioration had set in. The apparent catalyst was the appointment of former Port Adelaide great 'Shine' Hosking as non-playing coach in 1922. Hosking was only the second ever West Adelaide coach, his sole predecessor being Jack 'Dinny' Reedman who had been in charge for a single season in 1908.

Under Hosking West scraped into the finals with 7 wins from 14 minor round games and immediately struck a rich vein of form in the semi final against West Torrens, winning by 33 points, 16.12 (108) to 11.9 (75). Sadly, the old West failing of inaccuracy in front of goal surfaced in the final against minor premiers Norwood, costing the side whatever chance it might have had of causing an upset. West went down by 33 points after registering an inglorious 2.16 (28) to Norwood's 9.7 (61).

Almost predictably, an epidemic of internal bickering during the close season saw West effectively cutting its own throat, the major immediate consequence of the squabbling being the departure of Hosking to leave the side once again without a coach.

It took five years for the side to recover, and the improvement coincided with a move to new permanent headquarters at Wayville. It was the first time West had ever had a home ground that it could truly call its own; previously it had always shared its home venues with other clubs.

West celebrated by taking out the minor premiership in 1927. Surprisingly, despite having accumulated four premierships up to this point, this was the first time that West had ever finished the minor round on top of the ladder.

As things developed, the black and reds had ample cause to be grateful for this achievement, as a 4 point final loss to North Adelaide necessitated their invoking the right of

challenge. Second time around they made no mistake, edging home by 13 points, 10.11 (71) to 8.10 (58), watched by a crowd of 33,222. It was to be the last time for twenty years that West supporters would have reason to celebrate.

Consecutive 3rd place finishes in 1928 and 1929 brought to an end a decade that yielded considerably less in terms of achievement than might have been expected given the preponderance of talent at the club - players like Bobbie Barnes, Bruce McGregor, Bob Snell, Vic Peters, Harry Lee, Jack 'Snowy' Hamilton, Jack Bishop, Harold Solomon and Chris Bennett, who collectively provided firm proof of the adage that "champion players do not necessarily make a champion team".

Unfortunately, the 1930s were to prove to be even less auspicious for West. Between 1930 and 1940 the side failed to make the finals even once, winning barely 27% of all matches contested, a record bettered even by the league's Cinderella club, Glenelg. In 1933 West suffered the ultimate ignominy of losing every single match played (a total of 17), while from mid-1937 to mid-1938 the side contrived to lose 11 consecutive home matches, easily a club record.

Despite this West Adelaide was still home to a large number of prodigious talents including Bernie Mattiska, Colin Smith, Ray McArthur, Horrie Powell, Johnny, Don and Laurie Taylor, Jack Broadstock, and, all too briefly, 1931 Magarey Medallist Jack Sexton.¹⁸⁹

In 1941 West reached the major round for the first time in twelve years. A 16 point win over Port Adelaide in the first semi final raised hopes, but eventual premiers Norwood

¹⁸⁹ Sexton's story was one of triumph subsumed in tragedy. After joining West Adelaide from Glenelg in 1930 he went on to play only 19 games for the club, 16 of them in his Magarey Medal year of 1931. In 1932 Sexton joined Fitzroy where he remained for three seasons, the last two as captain. He returned to South Australia in 1935 as captain-coach of Norwood only to be struck down by pleurisy and pneumonia after playing only 6 games; he recovered sufficiently to resume his coaching duties for the remainder of the season but suffered a relapse and died on 26 October 1935.

proved too strong in the preliminary final, winning by 25 points, 9.16 (70) to 6.9 (45).



Jack Broadstock, one of Westies' greatest sons, albeit that he played just 67 games for the club.

The SANFL conducted a scaled down competition between 1942 and 1944 with the eight clubs being paired off on a more or less geographical basis. West's partners during this period were Glenelg and, bearing in mind the recent records of the two clubs, a hard time ahead might have been predicted. However, in its first year the combine surprised, reaching the grand final where it suffered a narrow loss in a high standard game to Port Adelaide-West Torrens. All told, West Adelaide-Glenelg won 18 of 42 matches played, the third best record of the four war time combinations.

With the resumption of full scale competition in 1945 West were set to embark on the longest sequence of consistently being either there or thereabouts in the club's history; unfortunately, however, it tended to be a case of rather more thereabouts than there. In the nineteen seasons between 1945 and 1963 West contested the finals on thirteen occasions, reaching the grand final seven times. However, only twice, in 1947 and 1961, was the team good enough to claim the ultimate prize.

West Adelaide's 1947 premiership side was arguably the best credentialled in the club's history containing as it did players of the calibre and high renown of Johnny Taylor (203 games between 1936 and 1949), Bernie Smith (who played 55 games with West before going on to win a Brownlow Medal and play in two premiership teams with Geelong), Colin Smith (215 games from 1934 to 1949), Fos Williams (54 games with West and later coach of nine Port Adelaide premiership sides), and Brian Faehse (222 games between 1944 and 1956).

After finishing the minor round in 3rd position with 10 wins and 7 defeats West proceeded to outclass both Sturt (by 59 points) in the first semi final and Port Adelaide (by 38 points) in the preliminary final. The grand final opposition was provided by Norwood, and West surprised most observers by controlling a low scoring affair from start to finish to get home by 5 goals, 10.15 (75) to 5.15 (45). Best afield was half back flanker Bernie Smith, with the victors also well served by

rover Fos Williams, centreman Gar Burkett, centre half back Brian Faehse and follower Johnny Taylor.

Within three years all but Faehse had left the club - yet more evidence of West's inveterate propensity to shoot itself in the foot.



Fred A'Court (157 games from 1949 to 1959) in action against arch 1950s rivals Port Adelaide.

West struggled between 1950 and 1953, missing the finals each year, but by 1954 they had rebuilt sufficiently well to contest another grand final. The opponents this time were Port Adelaide, and the pattern which events took in the match was to become sickeningly familiar to those associated with West over the course of the next decade.

By half time the black and reds had established a comfortable 25 point lead and seemed firmly in the box seat. However, an incident just before the half time bell effectively changed the match. West centre half back Brian Faehse felled Port centreman Dave Boyd with a fierce but legitimate shirt front, and an all in brawl developed. Then, as the West players tried to leave the field, they were besieged by angry Port supporters, with several players suffering actual physical assault.

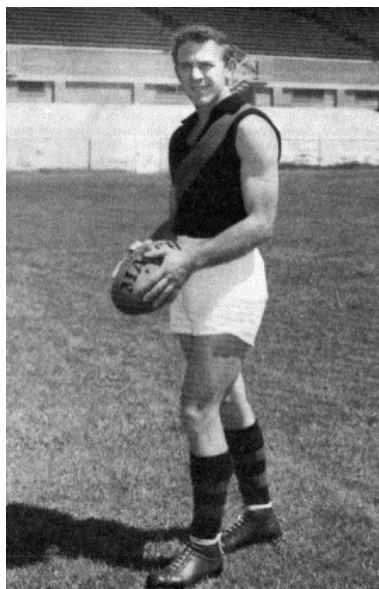
Hardly surprisingly, it was the Port players who settled down more swiftly after the interval, and by three quarter time West's lead had been trimmed to just 2 points. A frenetic last term saw Port clinging desperately to a narrow lead late on as West piled on the pressure, but fate was against the black and reds as numerous opportunities went begging, a shot from West rover Jim Wright in the dying seconds even hitting the goal post. Final scores were Port Adelaide 11.13 (79) to West Adelaide 10.16 (76), and West players and supporters had some justification - and not for the last time - for feeling 'robbed'.

After an abysmal 1955 campaign which saw the team slide to second from bottom West were back as a force the following year, reaching the grand final only to succumb once more to Port Adelaide. There could be few arguments this time, however, with the Magpies never looking in any serious danger as they took out the flag by 16 points, 12.9 (81) to 9.11 (65).

In 1957 Jack Oatey took over from Laurie Cahill as coach but West went down in the preliminary final to Norwood.

In 1958, West Adelaide played their first league match at their new home ground of Richmond Oval. The result was a 10 point win over West Torrens, and West went on to record victories in all but one of their home fixtures for the season. They were almost as impressive away from Richmond, winning 15 out of 18 home and away matches all told to secure the minor premiership for only the second ever time. A comfortable 26 point defeat of North Adelaide in the

second semi final followed, but the grand final was to produce yet another agonising twist in the ongoing West Adelaide-Port Adelaide saga.



Ken Eglinton, who played 163 games for the club between 1950 and 1959.

A near record crowd of 54,282 witnessed the 1958 grand final in which West seemed in control for long periods only for the Magpies to repeatedly fight back and keep themselves within striking distance. With nine minutes to go Port hit the front and, despite being under pressure for most of the remainder of the game, managed to hold onto their lead until the end. As if to rub salt into the wound, with ninety seconds remaining a shot from West ruckman Jack Richardson hit the goal post, leaving the Blood 'n Tars just 2 points in arrears. Even then West had another chance to recapture the lead, a set shot from Colin Brown failing to

make the distance from just forty yards out in the final few seconds. The final scoreboard read Port Adelaide 14.10 (94) to West Adelaide 14.8 (92), with the losers best served by Jeff Bray, Ken McGregor, Jim Wright, Ken Eglinton and Bert Johnson.

A piece of football folklore was created in the aftermath of the 1958 grand final as a group of West Adelaide supporters returned to Adelaide Oval late the same night and made off with the 'infamous' goal post which had got in the way of Jack Richardson's late shot.

Almost unbelievably, the 1959 season was to yield similar heart break to 1958. West finished the minor round as runners up to Port Adelaide but then comprehensively outplayed the Magpies to the tune of 25 points in the second semi final to go straight through to the 'big one'. However, on grand final day it was the same old story as Port managed to raise their game just sufficiently to keep out a fast finishing Blood 'n Tars combination and win by 10 points, 13.9 (87) to 11.11 (77). Best for Westies included wingman Ken Eglinton in the last of his 163 games for the club, Kerley, Eustice, Barker and Garnett.

After slumping to 4th in 1960 Jack Oatey departed to be replaced as coach by Neil Kerley. Under Kerley the Blood 'n Tars proved irrepressible in 1961, taking out the minor premiership and then overwhelming arch rivals Port Adelaide in the second semi by 17 points, 11.24 (90) to 9.19 (73). After Norwood surprisingly accounted for the Magpies in the following week's preliminary final West, having already outpointed the Redlegs in two of their three previous meetings for the season, entered the grand final as odds on favourites. Moreover, there was the clear advantage of having had a week's rest while Norwood were slogging their way to an energy-sapping 2 point victory over Port.

As it turned out, fitness and freshness were even more of the essence than usual, as the grand final took place in unprecedented heat which saw the thermometer rise to over 96 degrees Fahrenheit during the opening term. In retrospect, the match can be seen to have been won and lost

during that initial phase, with West changing ends at quarter time only 9 points down despite Norwood having had the advantage of a 3 or 4 goal northerly breeze. Over the final three quarters the Blood 'n Tars held sway all over the ground as they surged to a comfortable 36 point victory, 16.13 (109) to 11.7 (73). Notable performances for the victors in a match quickly dubbed by the press 'the Turkish bath grand final' came from Kerley, Reu, Eustice, Benton, Ryan and De Broughe.



Max Hewitt, 129 games from 1949 to 1960.

If there was a tinge of disappointment amidst the euphoria which inevitably attends a premiership victory it was to do with the fact that West's grand final victims had not been the detested Magpies. A year later, however, West had the opportunity to put the record straight. Despite suffering the indignity of a 73 point second semi final hiding against Port,

West fronted up to the Magpies again on grand final day in confident frame of mind having returned to form in the previous week's preliminary final against Norwood. The fact that no two games of football are ever the same was amply demonstrated as Port and West locked horns in one of the tightest grand finals in SANFL history. In a low scoring affair the lead changed hands repeatedly, but not quite repeatedly enough for Westies, who found themselves 3 points adrift at the final siren. The final scores were Port 8.10 (58) to West 7.13 (55), with commendable performances for the Blood 'n Tars coming from Kerley, Tregenza, Bennetts, De Brough and Reu.

It was to be West's last grand final appearance for twenty-two seasons.

Future prospects were not helped soon after the 1962 grand final when the powers that be at Richmond Oval decided to dispense with Neil Kerley's services as coach and replace him with Doug Thomas. Despite his success, Kerley was seen as something of a firebrand, and his frequent clashes with club president Cliff Semmler obviously did nothing to further his cause. In addition, he was believed to be seeking more money than the committee was prepared to pay.

The upshot of it all, however, was that West immediately went into decline. Between 1963 and 1980 the club only contested five finals series, with 3rd place in 1969 under Murray Weideman and in 1977 under Fos Williams representing their best efforts. During that time no fewer than eight different coaches were tried with only Weideman, at the helm from 1968-71, even managing to balance the ledger in terms of wins against losses. Weideman, a 179 game veteran with Collingwood, who later went on to coach that club, believed that a prime cause of West's failure was a lack of mental toughness on the part of players:

"I played in the same side as those West Adelaide players (for two years) and did the hard work for them..... And then when I

took over as non-playing coach and asked them to do the rough work for me I found they were treating me too much as a mate."¹⁹⁰

As ever, West fielded their share of champion players, even during what was arguably the most inauspicious era in the club's history. (What is unarguable is that twenty two years between grand final appearances represents an unparalleled barren spell.) Among such champions were ruckman Dexter Kennedy, who at just fifteen years and eleven months of age in May 1970 when he made his debut was the youngest player ever to appear in the SANFL; Bob Loveday who played 263 games for West between 1963 and 1978 as well as both captaining and coaching the side; three time Trabielsie Medallist¹⁹¹ and 1966 All Australian Robert Day; former Hawthorn star Bob Keddie; 209 game defender Rodney Pope, who went on to play with equal distinction for Norwood; 1977 Magarey Medallist Trevor Grimwood;¹⁹² and 1979 All Australian Geoff Morris, who alone of the above was still at the peak of his ability as a player when the Bloods next tasted premiership success in 1983.

Ironically, the architect of that premiership success turned out to be the same as twenty-one years earlier. In 1981, 'King' Kerley was lured back 'home' after having repeatedly demonstrated his coaching prowess elsewhere.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ 'Football Life', April 1975, page 27.

¹⁹¹ Awarded annually since 1958 to West's fairest and most brilliant player.

¹⁹² Grimwood was something of a rarity as far as West Adelaide Football Club is concerned in that he commenced his career elsewhere (Port Adelaide) but only really achieved notoriety after moving to Richmond Oval; more often than not over the course of West's history the cream has tended to flow in the opposite direction.

¹⁹³ In 1964 in his first season as coach of South Adelaide he had lifted the Panthers straight from a wooden spoon to a premiership. During his three years at South the side never missed the finals. Taking over at Glenelg he oversaw easily that club's most consistently successful era up to that point including a premiership in 1973 and losing grand final appearances in 1969, 1970, 1974 and 1975. A four year stint at West Torrens immediately prior to his return to West failed to add to the premiership tally but did nothing to diminish Kerley's reputation as he took a club which had been in the doldrums

As ever, the response of the team was both immediate and dramatic, 6 wins and narrow avoidance of the wooden spoon in 1980 being transformed into 11 wins and a berth in the elimination final during Kerley's first season in charge twelve months later. West did even better in terms of wins in 1982, but missed the finals on percentage. It was becoming obvious, however, that the side was rapidly maturing into something special, and in 1983 everything slotted into place as the Bloods proceeded to win all bar 4 of their minor round matches to secure the minor premiership with ease. A 24.16 (160) to 13.8 (86) second semi final triumph over Norwood followed, and when grand final day arrived with Sturt providing the opposition there were few who doubted where the premiership pennant was heading. The Double Blues managed to keep in touch for a quarter and a bit, but West always seemed to have something in reserve and once they broke clear there was no stopping them. Best for the Bloods in a 21.16 (142) to 16.12 (108) win included skipper Ian Borchard, whose performance earned him the Jack Oatey Medal for best afield, Geoff Morris, Peter Meuret, Leon Grosser and Robbie McKinnon.

The side was ravaged by injuries to star players in 1984 and dropped to 6th place. Kerley left the club at the end of the year and his replacement as coach, John Cahill, was to remain in charge for the following three seasons. During Cahill's stint as coach the Bloods managed a creditable 3rd in 1985 followed by a disappointing decline to 7th in each of the following two campaigns.

Progress under Cahill's successor, Kevin Morris, was slow, but by 1991 the team was widely considered to be strong enough to challenge for a premiership. However, a calamitous start to the season brought only 3 wins from the opening 11 matches and at that stage even finals participation appeared unlikely. Thereafter, though, West proved to be the form team of the competition, winning 9 of their last 11 fixtures

longer than any other to two finals appearances and, equally importantly, a new-found - albeit short-lived - respectability.

to leapfrog Norwood and Glenelg and eventually claim 5th spot going into the major round. An 84 point elimination final defeat of Port Adelaide would have brought particular satisfaction to West supporters with memories stretching as far back as the 1950s and early 1960s, and when this was followed by comfortable wins over Woodville-West Torrens in the first semi final and South Adelaide in the preliminary final, expectations in the Bloods' camp understandably soared. However, on grand final day North Adelaide was a fresher, hungrier and altogether more talented team than West, winning a spiteful game by 75 points, 21.22 (148) to 11.7 (73). Goss, Carlson, Schumann and Winton did well for the losers, but after a closely fought first term the result was never really in doubt.

Kevin Morris departed in controversial circumstances shortly after the grand final and, amidst allegations of back stabbing and stories of a club that was split asunder, favourite son Neil Kerley was invited to resume the coaching hot seat. Sadly for West it was to be a case of third time unlucky as the team failed to perform to potential, missing the finals in each of Kerley's two seasons in charge.

Geoff Morris (no relation to Kevin) took over as coach in 1994 and, in what was at this stage an extremely even SANFL competition, narrowly failed to get his charges into the major round.

In 1995 the Bloods scraped into the finals in the most dramatic of circumstances with a last round victory over Glenelg, while their rivals for 5th spot, South Adelaide, were losing a thriller against Norwood. However, North Adelaide quickly ended West's premiership aspirations with a 20 point elimination final triumph. Glenn Kilpatrick's joint Magarey Medal win afforded some consolation.

Former Norwood and Collingwood player Michael Taylor took over the coaching duties in 1996 but events proceeded in much the same way as twelve months earlier: the Bloods reached the finals, only to succumb at the first hurdle, this time to Woodville-West Torrens.



West's Lachlan Ross took this "specky" against South Adelaide at Football Park in 1990.

Things got even worse in 1997 as the side failed to make the finals, finishing 6th. However, in 1998 there was

major improvement as the Bloods qualified for the finals in 2nd spot with many observers regarding them as, physically, the toughest team in the league. This reputation was enhanced with a hard fought qualifying final victory over reigning premiers Norwood, but then the old, familiar West Adelaide inconsistency re-emerged: Sturt was comfortably victorious in the 2nd semi final and, even more humiliatingly, Port Adelaide overran the Bloods in the preliminary final amassing 7.8 to 0.0 in the last term to win by 77 points.

The rot continued in 1999 and 2000 as West plummeted down the list to 6th and then 7th. Coach Michael Taylor departed at the end of the 2000 season after a club record five consecutive seasons at the helm.

Season 2001 at least brought a measure of improvement as the Bloods qualified for the finals but any satisfaction was short-lived as Norwood secured a comprehensive victory in the elimination final. It was more or less the same story a year later, albeit that on this occasion it was the Eagles who inflicted the coup de grace.

In 2003, with former Adelaide and Hawthorn as well as West Adelaide ruckman Shaun Rehn installed as coach, the Bloods made their most concerted stab at a premiership for over a decade. After qualifying for the finals in 2nd place the side overcame the disappointment of a narrow 2nd semi final loss against Central District to enter its first grand final since 1991 via the back door of a 30 point preliminary final defeat of the Eagles. The team's performance in the preliminary final suggested that it was returning to the sort of form which had seen it emerge as the league's pace-setter during the first half of the season, but sadly on grand final day it proved unable to cope with Centrals' controlled aggression, cohesive team qualities, and pace. The Bulldogs won by 34 points, 17.9 (111) to 11.11 (77).

In 2004, injuries to key players effectively ruined the team's chances, with 5th position following a 33 point elimination final loss to North Adelaide probably representing the best return possible in the circumstances. Much worse was to follow, however. In 2005 the Bloods managed just 3

wins from 20 matches for the season and plummeted to their first wooden spoon in more than three decades. Hardly surprisingly perhaps, senior coach Shaun Rehn opted to resign.



West Adelaide's 'games played' record holder, Grantley Fielke, who retired in 1997 after representing the Bloods 364 times.

Under Rehn's successor as coach, Wayne Weidemann, there was no immediate improvement. Far from it, in fact, as the side managed a mere 2 wins in 2006 to succumb to the indignity of a second successive wooden

spoon. There was more ignominy in store in 2007 as the side's 3-17 record was once again the poorest in the competition, and for the first time in more than a century Westies had finished last on three consecutive occasions.

Twelve months later there had been little if any observable improvement as the Bloods again finished a distant and dismal last. A year later, however, there was at last some cause for optimism as the side enjoyed a season full of promise which ultimately saw them finish sixth, their highest placing since 2004, and a result that was repeated in 2010. The 2011 season saw the Bloods drop a rung on the premiership ladder to 7th before procuring long overdue finals participation in 2012 when they ultimately finished runners-up to Norwood. The following year saw Westies again qualifying for the finals and although they were unable to achieve back to back grand final appearances they did enjoy the financially lucrative compensation of defeating East Fremantle to win the Foxtel Cup.

Given the resources available it is doubtful if West will ever be able to create a dynasty on the order of those established at Alberton or the Parade, or more recently at Elizabeth, but a continuation of the club's habit of winning a premiership every decade or so looks perfectly feasible.

“Oxygen versus Beer” - Westies Break The Ice

1908 SAFL Challenge Final: West Adelaide vs. Norwood

After being admitted to the South Australian Football Association in 1897, West Adelaide endured eleven seasons of misery and under-achievement, managing just 23 wins and 1 draw from 145 games for a paltry overall success rate of 13.9%. The improvement managed in 1908

would be dramatic. For the first time in its history, the club had a nucleus of strong players, including the Leahy brothers, Bernie, Tom and Vin, veteran Jack 'Sorry' Tierney, eventual 1909 Magarey Medallist 'Dick' Head, known for much of his career as 'the king of centreman', wingman Johnny McCarthy, and rover 'Shrimp'. These players had enabled West to perform creditably in 1907 to secure 4 solid wins whilst avoiding the heavy defeats that had littered previous seasons.



The great Tom Leahy.

In 1908, the arrival as coach of former South Adelaide and North Adelaide ruck champion Jack 'Dinny' Reedman proved to be the catalyst needed for the team to transform its undoubted potential into full-blown success. Reedman was the first coach to be employed by the club in a non-playing capacity, and he oversaw some important developments, notably the recruitment of half a dozen highly promising players from country clubs. These players were D.Horgan (Mintaro), Alby Klose (Blumberg), J.F.McCarthy (Tarlee), B.Moy (Saddleworth), W.Price (Gawler South) and

V.Stephens (Jamestown). All six were constantly to the fore as West overcame a tentative start to claim second position on the ladder and a first ever finals berth at the conclusion of the home and away rounds.

West's main opposition for the 1908 premiership would come from reigning premiers and champions of Australia, Norwood. The Redlegs boasted a highly accomplished all round team which a month before the start of the finals had inflicted a hefty, for the era, 44 point defeat on the red and blacks, largely as a result of which it had finished half a game clear at the head of the premiership ladder going into the finals:

	Points						
	W	L	D	For	Ag	%	Pts
Norwood	10	1	1	792	498	61.39	21
West Adelaide	10	2	0	676	529	56.09	20
Port Adelaide	8	4	0	716	522	57.83	16
North Adelaide	6	5	1	697	632	52.44	13
West Torrens	4	8	0	605	739	45.01	8
South Adelaide	3	9	0	665	768	46.40	6
Sturt	0	12	0	449	912	32.99	0

Both semi finals went to form, with Norwood comfortably overcoming Port Adelaide, 11.12 (78) to 6.4 (40), and West scratching out a hard fought if scarcely convincing 15 point win over North Adelaide. In view of these results most people expected Norwood to secure the flag with some ease without recourse to the right of challenge, but Westies put in easily their best performance since entering the competition to win with something to spare, 6.15 (51) to 3.6 (24). The scene was thus set for what would be a classic challenge final, with the result in doubt right down to the wire.

A crowd of approximately 22,000 attended the decisive match at the Adelaide Oval, many of them lured there by the prospect of seeing the competition's Cinderella side break its duck. At quarter time, however, this looked distinctly unlikely as the Redlegs, having admittedly enjoyed the advantage of a firm breeze, had accumulated 3.7 (25) - more than they had managed in the entire previous week's game - whilst keeping West completely scoreless. Reedman managed to motivate his charges during the brief interval, however, and West fought back strongly in the 2nd term to be only 9 points in arrears at the long break.

The third quarter, by common consent, brought some of the finest football seen in South Australia for many years, with no quarter given nor asked, and Norwood adding 1.2 to 1.0 by West to head into the final change 11 points to the good. West, however, would be finishing the match with the aid of the breeze.

The final term was similarly hard fought, as West fought desperately to get back on terms and then, as time-on commenced, to hit the front for the first time.

To thousands probably, (the) closing minutes were as a lifetime. With less than two to go West Adelaide were leading by four points and were attacking strongly. The game looked a dead certainty for them. Then the red-and-blues broke away on the left wing and forwarded. Like a flash the ball sped to the other end. The crowd went wild. In their anxiety men jostled each other roughly, and women screamed. Some were too excited to speak. Others turned their backs upon the scene; they could not bear to see the result of that kick.

At last a tremendous cheer burst forth, a cheer which crashed thunder-like upon the air, and reverberated away into the distance - a cheer, however, which only partially eclipsed the accompanying groin, for only a behind had been recorded. As the ball was gain carried forward by the red-and-blacks, there arose a murmuring sound, such as that made by the washing of the waves upon the seashore, which swelled and swelled until the tinkling of

*the bell released the floodgates and the noise became pandemonium.*¹⁹⁴

West had remained just that bit steadier when it counted, and had made history. Norwood was left ruing its slight inaccuracy, as well as bemoaning the fact that its forward L.Chamberlain was denied a 'blatant' late free kick that could have enabled it to secure a victory most observers felt it did not deserve.



Norwood centreman Phil Robin.

After the match was over there were reports that Norwood had administered oxygen to its players both before and during the match in a bid to raise their levels of aerobic fitness; gleeful West Adelaide fans quickly seized on this

¹⁹⁴ From a report in 'The Adelaide Observer', cited in 'The SA Football Budget', 1/10/83, page 55.

intelligence and could be seen, on the night of the match, touring the city in a handsome cab bearing a poster which read 'Oxygen vs. Beer' - somewhat misleading, in point of fact, as the strongest thing the West Adelaide players had got their hands on during the course of the match was lime juice. (For months after the game, Norwood's grand final team of 1908 was popularly referred to as "The Oxygents".)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
West Adelaide	0.0	3.4	4.4	7.10	52
Norwood	3.7	4.7	5.9	6.13	49

BEST - West Adelaide: P.Bruce, T.Leahy, Tierney, Horgan, Stephens, J.Bruce, B.Leahy **Norwood:** Robin, H.Miller, Gwynne, Hill, Bahr, J.Chamberlain, W.Miller

GOALS - West Adelaide: Moy 4; P.Bruce 2; Price **Norwood:** J.Chamberlain 3; L.Chamberlain, Gibbons, Plunkett

ATTENDANCE: 22,000 approx. at the Adelaide Oval

Postscript

West Adelaide went on to emulate Norwood's 1907 achievement by defeating Carlton to secure the championship of Australia so that:

If ever a club had reason to be proud of its record it is West Adelaide. Bottom of the list of the SA Football League for years the red and blacks have been able in a single season to win not only the premiership of the state but the championship of the Commonwealth.

It is a marvellous achievement and one which is unparalleled in the history of the game in Australia. Every match they carried off during the season was a result of good combined play, remarkable handball, a wonderful ruck and a capital defence

and, above all, there was an esprit de corps amongst the players that made the team a brotherhood.

*Saturday after Saturday they mowed down teams who, prior to this season, used to try their juniors against them, so obscure they thought, and finally they wrested the premiership from the redoubtable Norwoods, the champions of the Commonwealth last year, in a game that will live long in the memories of those who saw it.*¹⁹⁵

Moreover, following the 12.9 (81) to 7.10 (52) championship of Australia win, and highlighting the enormous importance to the club of its having secured the services of an experienced, non-playing coach:

*The success of West Adelaide can be summed up in one word - system. The men kept their places, the shepherding was excellent, the ruck first class, and the kicking was good. In only one department of the game did Carlton excel, and that was in high marking..... West Adelaide worked like a piece of well-oiled machinery, and they achieved a victory of which not only the club and their thousands of loyal supporters but the whole state feel justly proud. Carlton themselves freely admit that they were beaten by a better team, and they heartily congratulated the red-and-blacks on becoming the champions of the Commonwealth.*¹⁹⁶

To the immense satisfaction of the club's supporters, West Adelaide's hard-won pre-eminence was not something that was about to disappear overnight. Indeed, the period between 1908 and 1912 remains the halcyon era in the history of the West Adelaide Football Club, with further premierships following in 1909 and 1911-12, as well as a second championship of Australia title, courtesy of a hard fought win over Essendon, in 1911.

¹⁹⁵ An unnamed contemporary source quoted in *Blood, Sweat And Tears* by Merv Agars, page 6.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pages 6-7.

Norwood, by contrast, was about to embark on a prolonged period of the 'outs', and would not again contest the season's premiership deciding match for another twelve years, nor return to the winners' enclosure until 1922.

The Turkish Bath Grand Final

1961 SANFL Grand Final: West Adelaide vs. Norwood

Apart from the spectacular fall from grace of 1960 premier North Adelaide, the 1961 SANFL minor round spawned few surprises, and gave rise to the following premiership ladder:

	Points						
	W	L	D	For	Ag	%	Pts
Port Adelaide	15	4	-	1,638	1,161	58.52	30
West Adelaide	14	5	-	1,827	1,287	58.67	28
West Torrens	14	5	-	1,782	1,410	55.82	28
Norwood	11	8	-	1,611	1,382	53.82	22
North Adelaide	10	9	-	1,537	1,465	51.19	20
South Adelaide	5	14	-	1,250	1,970	38.81	10
Glenelg	4	15	-	1,481	1,996	42.59	8
Sturt	3	16	-	1,330	1,785	42.69	6

Port Adelaide, which had just claimed its eighth minor premiership in nine seasons, was warmly favoured to 'come of age' by capturing its twenty-first senior flag. Coached by Geof Motley, the Magpies were aggressive to the point of ruthlessness, and were far and away the best defensive side in the competition.



Norwood's "Big Bill" Wedding wins a clean tap against Neil Kerley during the course of the 1961 SANFL grand final. Kerls had the last laugh, however.

In stark contrast, West Adelaide, which was being coached for the first time this year by Neil Kerley, played an open, vibrant, attacking brand of football in which handball

featured prominently (by the standards of the era, at any rate). The Blood 'n Tars had scored some hefty wins during the minor round, including a 106 point trouncing of South Adelaide in round 10, and a 126 point annihilation of Glenelg in round 18. They had lost two of their three clashes with Port Adelaide, however, and the Magpies had had the wood on them in finals matches for most of the previous decade.

Some of the “smart money” for the premiership was on West Torrens, which had won its last half a dozen home and away games of the season to go into the finals as the competition's form team. Included in that six match winning run were convincing victories over both of the top two teams: in round 14, the Eagles had defeated West 16.12 (108) to 12.14 (86), while the final minor round game of the season had seen them comfortably account for Port, 12.19 (91) to 9.13 (67). Both matches had been played at Thebarton Oval.

Norwood had not clinched a place in the finals until round 18, when a 19.14 (128) to 7.9 (51) thrashing of Sturt coincided with a 4 goal loss by North Adelaide against Torrens. In round 19, the Demons as they were then known, scratched out an unconvincing 24 point win over Glenelg, and few people expected them to challenge seriously for the flag. However, in football's renowned “hot gosseller” Alan Killigrew they had arguably the most inspirational coach in the business, and finals, as everyone knows, are a different matter entirely from the 'bread and butter' routine of ordinary league games.

If the 1961 minor round had been predominantly humdrum and predictable, the same could not be said for the finals series, in which upsets came thick and fast. In the 1st semi final, unfancied Norwood had no trouble whatsoever in dispatching West Torrens from finals contention. The Eagles simply never got going, and although the Demons were not particularly impressive themselves, they did not really need to be, given the weakness of the opposition, and won comfortably by 21 points, 11.15 (81) to 7.18 (60).

The surprises continued in the 2nd semi final as West Adelaide scored a rare major round win over Port Adelaide.

The Blood 'n Tars were too good all over the ground, and should have won by considerably more than their final margin of 17 points. The Magpies had bounced back before, however, and most people, other than perhaps Norwood supporters, expected them to do so again in their preliminary final clash with the Demons.

It was not to be. Despite enjoying the lion's share of the possession, Port simply could not kick straight. The Demons meanwhile defended heroically, and made the most of their attacking opportunities to sneak home by 2 points, 13.13 (91) to 11.23 (89). The 1961 finals series had witnessed three matches, and three upsets. Would the grand final, which pitted hot favourite West Adelaide against rank outsider Norwood, produce another turn-up for the books?

Both sides had many fine players, and plenty of finals experience. West captain-coach Neil Kerley was the archetypal football strong man, capable of turning the course of a match single-handedly. He had many noteworthy cohorts, including 1957 Magarey Medallist Ron Benton, tenacious and talented wingman Ken Eustice, who would win the Medal in 1962, resolute centre half back Jeff Bray, steely defender Jeff Bennetts, and the flamboyantly skilled and fleet-footed indigenous footballer Bert Johnson. Nevertheless, the team was not devoid of problems, with Stan Costello and Don Roach, both All Australians, failing fitness tests on the morning of the match.

If Norwood was considered to have a major advantage over Westies anywhere it was in the ruck. Bill Wedding, who had achieved All Australian selection earlier in the year at the Brisbane carnival, was in the view of some the finest tap ruckman in the land, and he was ably aided and abetted by two fine rovers in Peter Minervini and Bob Oatey. In a bid to counter this strength, Neil Kerley opted to lead the West rucks himself, intending to use his trademark strength, aggression and tenacity to undermine Wedding's impact.

The two sides had met on three occasions during the home and away series. In round 2 at the Parade the Blood 'n Tars had enjoyed consummate superiority in winning by 34

points, 11.22 (88) to 7.12 (54). They had won comfortably again at Richmond in round 9, scoring 11.16 (82) to the Demons' 9.8 (62), but perhaps significantly - or so some hopeful Norwood supporters imagined - when the teams had met at the grand final venue of Adelaide Oval in round 16 it had been the Demons who emerged triumphant, by 14 points. A major reason for their victory had been Killigrew's ploy of getting George Dellar to sacrifice his own game completely in the interests of nullifying Kerley. Dellar undertook these prototype tagging duties impeccably, and without Kerley's impact the Blood 'n Tars were effectively hamstrung.



West's 1957 Magarey Medallist Ron Benton.

Grand final day, Saturday 30 September, dawned extremely hot and dry, with an intermittently very strong northerly breeze blowing. The sauna-like temperatures - it rose to roughly 35°C at one stage - had an inimical impact on the attendance, which at just 40,909 was the smallest for a grand final since 1947 - when, it so happened, the same two teams had featured. Dubbed 'the Turkish Bath grand final', it would not be a close match, but a host of other factors would

combine to make it extremely memorable. As the teams lined up to listen to the national anthem prior to the start of play, Neil Kerley's round 16 nemesis, George Dellar, ignoring protocol, wandered over and nudged Kerley in the side, remarking "Got you again today, Kerley! You're mine, all day!"¹⁹⁷ Kerley's response, if indeed he uttered one, is unknown (except perhaps to Kerley).

The toss was won by Norwood captain Peter Aish, who elected to kick to the River Torrens end of the ground, which was favoured by a 3 to 4 goal breeze.

1st Quarter

There was drama right from the opening bounce as Neil Kerley made a wholly unambiguous statement of intent by running right through his 'shadow', George Dellar, and sending him crashing to the turf. The crowd roared in mingled fury and approbation, but umpire Sweeney waved play on.

Despite the heat, the opening minutes of the grand final were played at breakneck pace, with no quarter asked or given. West looked the more cohesive side early on, but it was the Demons who broke through to register the game's first goal, courtesy of a free kick awarded to Peter Minervini in the goal square after eight minutes. Buoyed by this success, the Demons poured forward in numbers, and further goals to Bob Kite and a second to Minervini pushed the margin out to 21 points.

Norwood wingman Denis Modra was the game's dominant player at this stage, but Kerley successfully reduced his impact by the simple expedient of moving Ken Eustice onto him. Eustice, who was much more defensively astute than Modra's previous opponent, Bert Johnson, not only curtailed the Norwood man's influence, he began to exert more of an impact himself. In one key incident, Eustice hit Demon rover Bob Oatey with a perfect hip and shoulder just

¹⁹⁷ Reported in *Knuckles: The Neil Kerley Story* by Jim Rosevear, page 72.

as Oatey was lining up the goals from near point blank range; Eustice then gathered the ball and cleared.



Ron Kneebone (Norwood)

Despite Norwood's healthy lead on the scoreboard, Westies were still enjoying territorial parity, and when Brian De Broughe's long hopeful kick bounced through for a somewhat fortuitous goal it was no more than they deserved. Shortly afterwards, West full forward Doug Thomas, under intense pressure and with nowhere to go, found De Broughe with an inch perfect handball and the lanky ruckman goaled again to reduce the margin to 9 points.

The Blood 'n Tars were now looking quicker and more decisive than their opponents, and another prolonged period of attacking pressure culminated in rover Jim Wright snapping truly under extreme duress to make it a 3 point ball game.

Shortly before the siren, Norwood ruckman Bill Wedding found Bob Oatey near goal, and the Demon rover made no mistake to restore his side's 9 point advantage. Nevertheless, on balance, given the strength of the breeze, it had clearly been West Adelaide's quarter.

QUARTER TIME: Norwood 4.5 (29); West Adelaide 3.2 (20)

2nd Quarter

Early in the 2nd quarter West centre half back Jeff Bray was injured and had to be replaced by twentieth man Peter Phipps. Kerley then re-arranged affairs so that half back flanker Trevor Reu went to centre half back to stand the dangerous John Lill, while Phipps went to Reu's back flank. Moments later Lill goaled to put Norwood 15 points in front, but overall his impact would be diminished thanks to an energetically confident display from Reu.

With West centreman Johnny Ryan on top of Lester Ross, and Kerley in everything virtually all over the ground, the red and blacks slowly began to seize the initiative. Two goals to Frank Hogan followed, together with a succession of behinds, and suddenly the margin was a bare point.



Jeff Bennetts (West)

Players all over the ground were now flagging because of the intense heat, and umpire Sweeney briefly

stopped the play in order to banish about ten trainers from the field. The trainers had been ferrying wet towels to the worst afflicted players, but apparently such solicitude was contrary to Sweeney's concept of the "spirit of the game".

West was now winning decisively across centre and on the ball, but the Demons, showing great pluck, snatched an invaluable breakaway goal through Bob Oatey. Westies replied through Ron Benton, only for Norwood to hit back almost immediately courtesy of John Vickers. With time running out, Brian De Broughe, who was playing the game of his life, both on the ball and while resting in a forward pocket, goaled to reduce the margin to a solitary point once more. This time Norwood's resistance crumbled, and a couple more goals to West before the break made the margin 11 points, and the signs ominous.

HALF TIME: West Adelaide 9.5 (59); Norwood 7.6 (48)

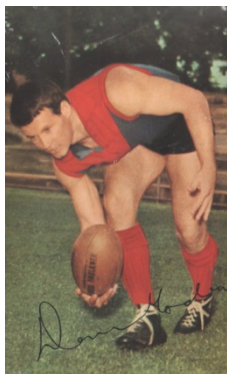
3rd Quarter

John Lill managed to elude Trevor Reu briefly early in the 3rd term to goal and put Norwood back to within a straight kick. The game was now entering a key phase, with the Demons needing to take maximum advantage of the still powerful breeze if they were to have a chance. West responded almost immediately, however, as a long handpass by Peter Phipps released Ron Benton who was able to score the Blood 'n Tars' 10th goal.

Despite the heat, both teams were now battling ferociously, aware that the next goal could be vital. It went Norwood's way, off the boot of Bob Kite, and once more there was less than a straight kick between the two sides.

Norwood continued to attack frantically for the next few minutes, but West's defence was equal to the challenge. The Demons desperately needed to get a lift from their ruckmen, Bill Wedding and Geoff Feehan, but Kerley and De Broughe were well on top in this department. Moreover, since

Kerley's opening term ploy of swapping his wingmen, West had been comprehensively on top across centre.



Norwood speedster Denis Modra.

After absorbing plenty of Norwood pressure, the Blood 'n Tars broke away, and two goals in quick succession during time-on from Wright and Hogan gave them a potentially match-winning lead of 19 points at the final change.

THREE QUARTER TIME: West Adelaide 12.8 (80); Norwood 9.6 (60)

4th Quarter

Norwood coach Alan Killigrew rang the changes at three quarter time in a bid to manufacture an improbable comeback. Players of both sides were utterly fatigued by this stage, however, and although the Demons managed to stay within striking distance for the first fifteen minutes or so of the quarter, ultimately their resistance crumbled, and West ran away with the game.

On one occasion during the term Norwood defender Ron Kneebone collapsed to his knees as he chased the ball

towards the boundary, while umpire Sweeney's policy of preventing trainers from attending to dehydrated players was to have some pretty devastating, and potentially dangerous, effects. Neil Kerley, for example, who had arguably covered more kilometres during the game than any other player, lost about 3kg in weight, and was taken ill while being interviewed at a TV studio later that evening.



Neil Kerley in action for South Australia against the VFL.

Key contributors to Westies' late surge in this quarter were rover Frank Hogan, who ended the match with 4 goals, ruckman Brian De Broughe, who kicked 5, centremen John Ryan, whose use of the ball was impeccable, and of course

Kerley. For Norwood, full back and skipper Peter Aish, who managed to keep his opponent Doug Thomas goalless, gave perhaps the most even performance of any player on either side, while rover Bob Oatey, who played with great fervour and skill, made it obvious that he was a champion performer in the making.

West's 36 point win gave the club its first premiership in fourteen years, and was popularly received. The Blood 'n Tars had been on the wrong end of some close grand final defeats in recent years, and few neutral fans begrudged them this success.

FINAL SCORE: West Adelaide 16.13 (109); Norwood 11.7 (73)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
West Adelaide	3.2	9.5	12.8	16.13	109
Norwood	4.5	7.6	9.7	11.7	73

BEST - West Adelaide: Kerley, Ryan, Hogan, Reu, Eustice, Benton, De Broughe, Johnson **Norwood:** Aish, Oatey, Lill, Johnson, Kneebone, Modra, Kite, Minervini

SCORERS - West Adelaide: De Broughe 5; Hogan 4; Benton, Garnet, Wright 2; Ryan **Norwood:** Kite, Lill, Minervini, Oatey 2; Feehan, Modra, Vickers

ATTENDANCE: 40,909 at the Adelaide Oval

Postscript

West Adelaide continued as a force in 1962, reaching the grand final once more, but losing on this occasion to Port Adelaide. The margin was only 3 points, and West were felt by many to have been somewhat unfortunate to lose, but the club committee inexplicably responded by sacking Neil Kerley as coach. Given what

happened subsequently, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this decision by the committee was a major factor in consigning the West Adelaide Football Club to two decades of mediocrity. Its next premiership would not occur until 1983, when, significantly, Neil Kerley had again assumed the coaching reins.

Norwood's fortunes dipped sharply after the 1961 grand final. The club would not again play off for the premiership until 1975, but from that time onwards it would be at or near the forefront of the game in South Australia.

Several of the players involved in the 1961 grand final achieved further notoriety during their football careers. Ken Eustice, as was mentioned above, went on to win the 1962 Magarey Medal, and later played with distinction for both Central District and Glenelg. However, he never again played in a premiership team. Robert Oatey was a great performer for Norwood in 232 games between 1961 and 1973. He also captain-coached the club during his last half a dozen seasons, and was largely responsible for introducing the structures and implementing the procedures that would eventually make the Redlegs - as they were known by this time - great again. He ended his career with Sturt, and was a member of that club's 1974 premiership team. Ron Kneebone went on to win the 1966 Magarey Medal, the culmination of a fine, eleven season, 201 game league career. Bill Wedding further enhanced his reputation as one of Australia's premier knock ruckmen with fine performances in winning South Australian state sides against the 'Big V' in Melbourne in 1963 and in Adelaide two years later. Jeff Bray was, for a time, one of the finest key position defenders in Australia, but his career was cruelly undermined by injuries sustained after he transferred to South Melbourne in 1964.

Neil Kerley went on to enhance his coaching pedigree at South Adelaide, Glenelg and West Torrens, before returning to Westies in 1981. He also coached South Australia. Donald Neil Kerley is without doubt one of the all-time great personalities in the history of South Australian, indeed Australian, football.

Alan Killigrew coached Norwood for one further season, and in 1963 he moved to North Melbourne. In four seasons with the Kangaroos his most noteworthy achievements were steering his charges to consecutive night flags in 1965-6. "Killa" also coached the VFL interstate team to a carnival win at Hobart in 1966.

WEST TORRENS

Home Ground: Thebarton Oval

Formed: 1894 as Port Natives; changed name to West Torrens in 1897

Colours: Blue and gold (originally red and white, then black and gold)

Emblem: Eagles

Senior Grade Premierships: 1924, 1933, 1945, 1953 (4 total)

Other Premierships: Patriotic League 1918 (1 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1983 (1 total)

Magarey Medallists: T.MacKenzie 1902; D.Low 1912; J.Karney 1921*; M.Pontifex 1932; R.Hank 1946 & 1947; L.Head 1955, 1958 & 1963 (6 Medallists/9 Medals)

All Australians: R.Hank 1953; L.Head 1956; G.Kingston 1961; R.Shearman 1961 (4 total)

League Top Goalkickers: A.Daly (27) 1900; J.Willis (85) 1952; G.Kingston (79) 1961 (3 total)

Highest Score: 34.15 (219) vs. South Adelaide at Adelaide Oval in round 14 1950

Most Games: 325 by Lindsay Head from 1952 to 1970

Record Home Attendance: 20,832 in 1962: West Torrens 11.8 (74) drew with Norwood 10.14 (74)

Record Finals Attendance: 48,755 for the 1948 grand final at Adelaide Oval: Norwood 15.16 (106); West Torrens 6.13 (49)

** indicates awarded retrospectively by SANFL in 1998*

When the Adelaide Crows overturned both the odds and St Kilda at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on that 'one day' in September to clinch the 1997 AFL premiership their performance was perceived in many quarters as a testimony to the spirit of South Australian football.¹⁹⁸ Roared on by several thousand supporters physically present at the 'G', and psychologically buoyed up by the fervent prayers of hundreds of thousands back home, the Crows were also, in a sense, the embodiment of a South Australian football tradition stretching back well over a hundred years.

Some of the most prominent contributors to that tradition wore the blue and gold of the West Torrens Football Club. Indeed, had Australian football boasted a national competition from the outset it is likely that names like MacKenzie, Low, Pontifex, Hank and Head would have figured prominently on several occasions on grand final day. Instead, they were major contributors toward the creation of one of South Australian football's most auspicious club traditions, although the use of the word 'auspicious' here ought not to be confused with 'successful'.

The first recorded reference to a West Torrens Football Club dates back to 1879 when a team bearing that name participated in a number of scratch matches. The team wore red and white playing uniforms and, appropriately enough, tended to be referred to as the Butchers, owing to the large number of team members who worked at the local West Park slaughterhouse. Indeed, the team had its home ground

¹⁹⁸ The fact that the flag-winning combination included 5 Victorians and 2 Western Australians was, to most Crows supporters at any rate, of purely incidental significance.

adjacent to the slaughterhouse, and just behind the Adelaide Gaol.



The West Torrens players enjoy a well-earned break at three quarter time of a match against North Adelaide at Kensington Oval in 1955. In the end, all the hard work was worth it, as the Eagles managed to fend off the defiant Roosters and win by 13 points, 11.13 (79) to 9.12 (66).

The origins of the team which went on to carry the name of West Torrens into the SAFA and SANFL date back to 1894, however, when a group of Port Adelaide players, unable to get a regular game, elected to form a breakaway side known as Port Natives. This team, which wore red and white playing uniforms, was affiliated with the Adelaide and Suburban Association in 1894 and the following year was admitted to the SAFA, when it changed its colours to black and gold. After two seasons under the Port Natives moniker during which it finished last and second to last the club

members unanimously agreed a name change to West Torrens in 1897 to coincide with the inception of district football. By this time, the club had also adopted the blue and gold colours that would become its trademark.



West Torrens' 1902 Magarey Medallist Tom Mackenzie.

Until 1922 the side played most of its home matches at the well-appointed but misleadingly named Hindmarsh Oval - mistaken because it was anything other than oval in shape - before moving to a new and permanent home base, Thebarton Oval, which it was to retain until its final ever league season in 1990, when it relocated to Football Park.

Although success proved elusive the club was never exactly a chopping block either. It reached the finals for the first time in 1900, and should really have progressed at Norwood's expense after a 1st semi final during which it managed 12 scoring shots to the Redlegs' 5 but, incongruously, ended up 8 points in arrears. Thanks to the

vagaries of the finals system in operation at the time, however, Torrens were actually placed 3rd, their pre-finals position, after Norwood, which had ended the minor round in 4th place, lost to South Adelaide the following week.

Further losing major round appearances followed in 1902 (defeated by North Adelaide), 1907 (lost to Port Adelaide), 1909 (lost to West Adelaide), 1910 and 1912 (lost to Port Adelaide on both occasions), and 1914 (downed by North Adelaide). Torrens were placed 4th each time.

A finals victory did not arrive until 1919 when arch rivals Port Adelaide were vanquished by 4 goals in the 2nd semi final. Torrens and North Adelaide then fought out a low scoring draw in the final only for the blue and golds to succumb by 5 points in the replay; they thus finished 3rd.

It was back to "business as usual" in 1920 as Torrens lost the 1st semi final to North Adelaide by 15 points to be placed 4th. The side missed the finals in 1921 but rose to 3rd the following year before failing to reach the finals again in 1923.

In 1924, after thirty seasons in the competition, West Torrens finally made the big breakthrough, but they had the right of challenge to thank for it. After qualifying for the major round in pole position with an 11-2-1 record the side played poorly in the 1st semi final against 3rd placed Norwood to go under by 15 points. As minor premiers, however, the players were then afforded the luxury of licking their wounds and sitting back and watching as the Redlegs and Sturt slugged it out in the following week's final with the eventual victors - Sturt - then qualifying to meet Torrens in the premiership deciding challenge final.

'SA Footballer' writer 'the Wizard' previewed the encounter thus:

Across the centre and in the rucks the teams look to be evenly matched. Sturt are probably Torrens' superiors in the air, but the Blue and Golds I think put a little more snap and vim into their ground play than the Unley men do. So it resolves itself into a question of how the forwards will fare against the opposing defence

*lines, and.....I am inclined to think that it is here that Sturt will gain the advantage.*¹⁹⁹

Most pundits concurred with this view, but Torrens, having never previously played off for a premiership, were the warmest of sentimental favourites. The prospect of a classic 'David slays Goliath' scenario attracted a record South Australian sporting crowd of 44,300 to the Adelaide Oval and, after the blue and golds opened well, kicking 3 goals to 1 in the first term, they were treated to a tense, closely fought game. The sides were evenly matched but favoured contrasting styles of play. Sturt preferred a strictly traditional, kick and mark approach, while Torrens were renowned for their expedient use of the flick pass (although some claimed that their over-indulgence in this skill was a weakness).

At half time the Double Blues had narrowed the margin to 4 points, and although the blue and golds managed to increase this slightly to 6 points at the last change the outcome of the match was still clearly in the balance. Sturt seemed to be gaining the upper hand early in the final quarter only to undermine their prospects with 5 successive behinds. Gaining confidence from this, Torrens steadied during the closing minutes to run out winners by 8 points, 9.12 (66) to 8.10 (58). Hollis top scored with 3 goals, while full back Daviess, ruckman Karney, centre half forward Minear, rover O'Grady and half forward Adams (2 goals) all made sterling contributions. Sturt skipper Vic Richardson visited the victors changing rooms afterwards and, after offering his congratulations, offered the unusual - indeed, by today's standards, almost unbelievable - observation that "We would have rather lost to you than any other team".

Despite the banning by the Australasian Football Council of Torrens' chief weapon, the flick pass, the side once again played off for the flag in 1925. However, after losing to minor premier Norwood by a solitary point, the blue and golds were officially placed 4th, as this was their pre-finals position.

¹⁹⁹ 'SA Footballer', 27/9/24, page 5.

During the remainder of the 1920s the club alternated between 4th and 5th place on the ladder, perfectly capable of winning against a top side one week and then losing to a basement dweller the next.

The 1930s started off in much the same vein but in 1933 there was a welcome if slightly unexpected return to prominence as, under the astute coaching of former Port Adelaide great 'Shine' Hosking, the side finished 2nd after the minor round before comfortably claiming a berth in the grand final at the expense of Sturt. The achievement was rendered all the more notable by virtue of the fact that Torrens were without their 1932 Magarey Medal winning centreman Max Pontifex, who had been controversially outed for 3 games after an incident in the last minor round game of the year against Glenelg.²⁰⁰ West Torrens went to great lengths to get the sentence quashed, even sending a deputation to league headquarters at one point, but to no avail.

In the grand final against Norwood George Frogley, Pontifex's replacement in the pivot, put in an outstanding performance as the blue and golds won well, 13.10 (88) to 9.11 (65), in front of a crowd of 33,444. The match, which was extremely rugged and fast-paced, remained close until the last change, at which stage Torrens led by just 3 points. However, they finished full of running, the consensus being that they had benefitted from having a week's rest while the Redlegs were engaged in a gruelling preliminary final clash with Sturt. Besides Frogley, Simpson, Ashby, McLoughlin, McKenzie, Bridgman and Quinn were best for the victors.

Torrens' next legitimate assault on the premiership coincided with the outbreak of world war two in 1939. This time Torrens qualified for the grand final the hard way with wins over Norwood by 4 points in the 1st semi final and South Adelaide by 35 points in the preliminary final.

²⁰⁰ Pontifex, who was near the centre of the ground at the time of the incident, was actually reported by one of the goal umpires, almost 100 metres away, for allegedly striking a Glenelg opponent with a clenched fist in retaliation for being 'sprigged'; observers closer to the incident, however, confirmed Pontifex's claim that he had used the open hand rather than the fist.

Despite, or perhaps, somewhat perversely, because of, the recent onset of a war which had not yet become real in people's minds, a new record crowd of 44,885 turned up at Adelaide Oval for the grand final, in which Torrens were pitted against Port Adelaide. Somewhat surprisingly, they were to witness a disappointingly one-sided match. Port remained in consummate control throughout, and only inaccuracy in front of goal lent some credibility to the scoreline as far as the blue and golds were concerned. Final scores were Port Adelaide 16.28 (128); West Torrens 11.11 (77).



Action from West Torrens' victorious grand final meeting with Port Adelaide in 1945.

The SANFL only continued full scale competition for a further two seasons before the demands of war became too great. In a perverse way, those associated with West Torrens must have been thankful, for the club appeared to be entering

a depressed phase with 7th and 8th place finishes in 1940 and 1941 respectively.

Torrens combined with Port Adelaide for the three seasons of the SANFL's wartime competition and met with considerable success, winning 31 of 42 matches contested and reaching all three grand finals. In 1942 Port Adelaide-Torrens defeated West Adelaide-Glenelg 18.12 (120) to 16.13 (109) in front of 31,245 spectators, but lost the decisive matches of both 1943 and 1944 to Norwood-North Adelaide.

In 1945, with a comparatively inexperienced group of players under his charge, Mal Dury coached Torrens to an unexpected premiership.

After finishing the minor round in 3rd position with a 10-7 record West Torrens overcame North Adelaide by 6 points in a 1st semi final memorable for the goal kicked by Torrens rover Jim Thoms while the bell signalling the end of the game was ringing, unheard by umpire Ken Aplin.

In the preliminary final a fortnight later Torrens trailed Norwood by over 4 goals midway through the 3rd quarter, only to come storming home to win by 4 points.

Grand final opponents and erstwhile allies Port Adelaide had comfortably downed Norwood in the 2nd semi final and had lost just 2 matches all year, so were understandably warmly favoured to win. A new record crowd of 47,500 turned up, the third time in succession that Torrens had featured in the game which saw the record broken. Port kicked 8 goals to 2 in the opening term and an annihilation looked on the cards, but Torrens came back strongly in the 2nd quarter to go in at the long break just 4 points in arrears. With youngsters like centreman Bob Hank and ruckman Don Prior leading the way the blue and golds grabbed the lead during the 3rd term and never looked back, only ineffectual goalkicking preventing a runaway win. West Torrens won 15.25 (115) to 15.12 (102), with excellent displays coming from Nicholls, McInnes, Cox and Edwards, in addition to the two players previously mentioned.

As proved to be the case throughout the club's history Torrens were unable to go on with things in 1946, dropping

down the ladder to 5th. After an identical result in 1947, however, things improved dramatically the following year as the side qualified for the finals in 2nd spot before acquiring premiership favouritism with a 3 point 2nd semi final defeat of Norwood. A fortnight later though Torrens inexplicably 'froze' when it mattered and the Redlegs gained their revenge by 57 points. With the exception of the 2nd term the blue and golds were never really in the match, but even during that quarter a return of 2.5 to 0.2 failed to generate any real scoreboard pressure. The second half saw Norwood pile on 10.10 to 3.4 and for Torrens it was a case of 'back to the drawing board'.

Frustratingly, however, 1949 brought a repeat performance, although at least the side were a little more competitive on grand final day, going down to North Adelaide by 23 points.

In each of the next three seasons West Torrens reverted to their "favourite" position of 4th, its conquerors in the respective 1st semi finals being Port Adelaide by 34 points, Glenelg by 38 points, and Norwood by 11 points. The side was on the verge of something special, however. In 1953 things were finally to come together with a vengeance as the club recorded its 4th but, sadly, also its final, flag.

Of all the premierships won by Torrens that of 1953 was arguably the most decisive and convincing, but by no stretch of the imagination could it be termed "easy". After proving the dominant team throughout the minor round the Eagles looked to be in trouble during the 2nd quarter of their 2nd semi final clash with Port Adelaide when they trailed badly, 0.0 (0) to 6.6 (42). Thereafter, however, everything mysteriously "clicked", and they went on to add 15.6 to 1.2 over the remainder of the match to win with ease.

The Magpies comfortably accounted for Glenelg in the preliminary final and the 42,948 spectators who turned up for their re-match with Torrens were treated to one of the greatest grand finals in South Australian football history. In one of those games where neither side is able to acquire a decisive advantage Port led by 6 points at quarter time, Torrens by a point at the half, and the Magpies by 6 points

again at the final change. As the match entered its closing moments the Eagles had edged their way back in front by the narrowest of margins and were hanging on defiantly. Port then made their last, desperate forward thrust and as they approached to within goalkicking range Neville Hayes attempted to handball to team mate Leaver. Torrens half back Frank Graham read the play, however, and ran in to intercept before launching a swift counter attack which culminated in Ray Hank kicking what proved to be the decisive goal.



All-time great of the game, Bob Hank: 2 Magarey Medals, 8 club champion awards, an All Australian in 1953, 224 games for Torrens, and 27 interstate appearances.

Hefty Torrens back pocket Mick Clingly was a widespread choice as best afield in a 9.13 (67) to 8.12 (60) win which effectively ended the greatest ever era of one club

(Torrens) whilst engendering that of another (Port Adelaide). As far as the Eagles were concerned there would be no further grand final appearances whatsoever, while in the thirty-seven seasons which remained until the club's demise in 1990 it would qualify to participate in the major round on only another ten occasions for just 1 finals win.

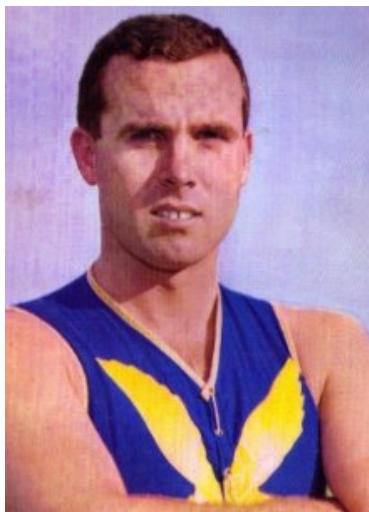
That win actually came the very next season when Torrens dislodged Norwood's premiership attempt at the 1st semi final stage only to get thrashed by West Adelaide a fortnight later. Fourth place in 1955 and 1957 was the best that the Eagles could manage for the remainder of the decade.

Under the tutelage of former Essendon champion Dick Reynolds Torrens looked to be re-emerging as a force during the early 1960s, but lost to Norwood in the 1st semi finals of both 1961 and 1962 "after looking the most complete football team in the state".²⁰¹ The consensus appeared to be that the Eagles were susceptible under pressure, a perception further reinforced in 1963 when they bowed out of the flag race with successive finals defeats after earning the minor premiership.

Things would get even worse, however. The gap between success and failure in sport can sometimes be frustratingly, even agonisingly, narrow, as one of the finest West Torrens sides in history discovered in 1963. With players like triple Magarey Medallist Lindsay Head, 1961 All Australian and Bob Shearman, the ever-versatile and resourceful Fred Bills, and strong marking, long kicking full forward Neil Hawke, the Eagles provided the backbone of the South Australian interstate side that scored a noteworthy victory over the VFL at the MCG that season. Other fine players donned the blue and gold jumper in 1963 as well: Geoff Kingston, another All Australian, who had few peers as a key position forward anywhere in Australia; tenaciously astute full back Tracy Braidwood; formidable utility Glen Pill;

²⁰¹ *SANFL 1963 Official Yearbook*, page 63.

hardy and combative ruckman Eric Dix; assured defender Rod Payze; and lively wingman or back pocket Bob Gibson.



Football genius Lindsay Head.

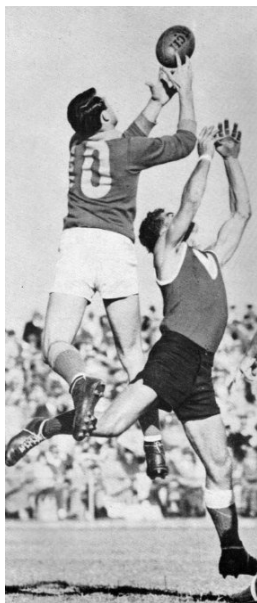
Nevertheless, the Eagles took a while to get going in '63, losing their first 3 matches, and "looking like a struggling team".²⁰² Indeed, a 'Football Budget' writer went so far as to suggest that, for their round 4 clash with Sturt at Thebarton, their season was more or less on the line.²⁰³

Torrens not only won that match, they won 11 and drew 1 of the next 13, to have the minor premiership sewn up with two rounds still to play. It was not just the fact that they were winning that was impressive, however, it was the fact that they were doing so with a style, conviction and authority that no team from Thebarton had displayed in a decade. During August the Eagles effortlessly swept past North

²⁰²SA Football Budget', 4/5/63, page 4.

²⁰³Ibid., page 4.

Adelaide by 91 points, South Adelaide by 28 points, Sturt by 37 points, and West Adelaide by 26 points, prompting the 'Budget' writer to regard them as warm favourites for the flag.²⁰⁴



Geoff Kingston marks superbly during the Eagles' heart-breaking 2 point loss to North Adelaide in the 1963 preliminary final.

Then disaster struck. For the round 19 encounter with Norwood at Thebarton Torrens found themselves without four key players: Glen Pill, Eric Dix, Rod Payze, and, most crucially of all, Neil Hawke. During the second half of the season in particular, the chief reason for the Eagles' dominance had been the imposing, authoritative form shown by their two interchangeable key position forwards, Kingston

²⁰⁴ 'SA Football Budget', 10/8/63, page 1.

and Hawke. If one of them was being beaten in a certain position, Dick Reynolds could almost invariably rectify matters by switching the pair around. Without Hawke therefore, the team was effectively hamstrung, with getting goals likely to be a major problem.

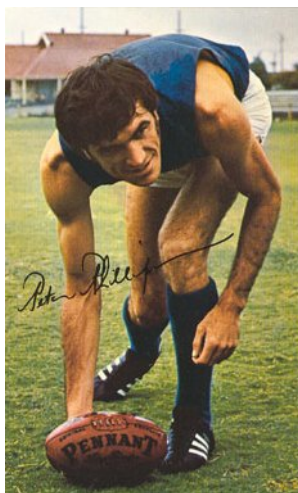
And so it proved. Against the Redlegs, Torrens managed a mere 8.16 (64), their lowest score since a round 9 clash with Sturt on an Unley Oval quagmire. Norwood, which would fail to contest the finals, won with embarrassing ease by 48 points.

The following Saturday, with the same quartet missing, the Eagles again struggled ahead of centre against Port Adelaide at Adelaide, and went under by 27 points. Clearly, as far as Torrens were concerned, the season had lasted just a little too long, an impression amplified when their injury depleted side succumbed to Port Adelaide (by 17 points) and North Adelaide (by a heart-rending margin of 2 points, albeit with Neil Hawke back in the side) in successive finals matches. During the minor round, the Eagles had twice trounced North Adelaide, by 67 and 91 points, but that had been with close to a full complement of players available. Given that the Port Adelaide team which went on to win the grand final at the expense of North Adelaide was, according to popular consensus, one of the weakest post-war premiership combinations, it is hard not to draw the conclusion that injuries robbed West Torrens of a fifth league flag.

The Eagles did not again contest the finals until 1969, when they were coached by another former Essendon luminary in John Birt. After winning their last 9 home and away games to clinch a major round berth, Torrens were favoured in many quarters for the flag, but after throwing away a seemingly match-winning position against West Adelaide in the 1st semi final to allow the Blood 'n Tars to get up to draw the players seemed suddenly drained of self-belief. The old problem of vulnerability under pressure had resurfaced. Reviewing the match in the following Saturday's 1st semi final replay edition the 'Budget' writer observed that:

West proved themselves real narks. Not only did they get up to draw, but they exposed a brittleness in Torrens which has not shown up since early in the season. When West applied the pressure in the third quarter, with weight and fire, Torrens did not like it. If they did, they did not show it on the scoreboard. Torrens kicked 8.3 in the first half, in a couple of bursts rather than from any sustained effort. But once the heat was on in the second half they kicked only 3.7, and acted as if they would have preferred (West captain-coach) Murray Weideman to have gone home to Collingwood.²⁰⁵

The replay saw West assume complete almost control after half time to win by 21 points. It is arguable that the West Torrens Football Club never properly recovered from this morale-sapping loss. Certainly, the club never again seriously challenged for South Australian football's top prize.



Peter Phillipou, who played 272 games for the Eagles in two separate stints between 1967 and 1984.

²⁰⁵ 'SA Football Budget', 13/9/69, page 2.

John Birt left after a disappointing 1970 season which saw the Eagles slump to 8th, and neither of his immediate successors, Allen Greer or Bill Barrot, managed to resurrect the side's fortunes. Midway through the 1974 season, however, Barrot was dismissed in somewhat acrimonious circumstances, and under stop-gap replacement Wayne Jackson²⁰⁶ Torrens came home with a wet sail to qualify for the elimination final.²⁰⁷ That was where their season ended though, as they were given a decisive reminder by Glenelg of the gulf they still had to traverse to become a top side. True, the Bays' ultimate margin of victory was 'only' 36 points, but 43 scoring shots to 22 probably gives a truer indication of the respective sides' capabilities.



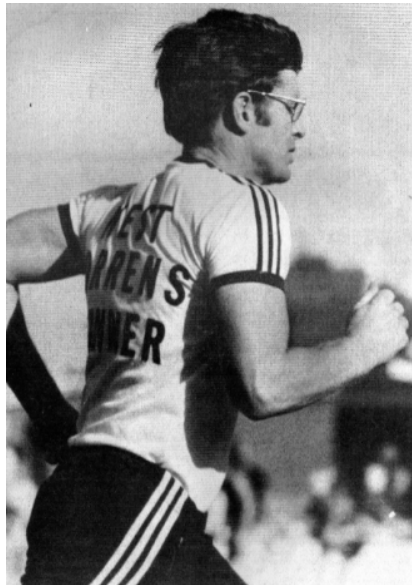
One of Torrens' - and the SANFL's - greatest ever clubmen, Fred Bills: 313 games for the Eagles from 1959 to 1975.

²⁰⁶ Jackson, a former Torrens player, was later to reach the rarefied heights of AFL Chief Executive.

²⁰⁷ The SANFL introduced a 'final five' in 1973.

This point was emphasised when, under Noel Teasdale, the Eagles picked up the wooden spoon in both of the next two seasons.

South Australian football legend Neil Kerley took the reins in 1977 but in a four season coaching stint the best he could manage were two 5th place finishes in 1978 (lost the elimination final to Port Adelaide by 13 goals) and 1980 (beaten by Norwood by 45 points, after leading at half time).²⁰⁸



Future AFL Chief Executive Wayne Jackson, shown above acting as the West Torrens runner in 1978. Jackson was also president of the club at the time.

²⁰⁸ The only achievement of note during the club's final decade was its 7.15 (57) to 5.7 (37) defeat of South Adelaide in the 1983 Escort Cup grand final.

The Norwood loss was the West Torrens Football Club's last ever appearance in the major round. During the remaining ten seasons of the club's existence it finished bottom or second to bottom every year bar 1987 and 1989. In common with all other SANFL clubs of this era Torrens lost a succession of players to the VFL²⁰⁹ but whereas the likes of Port Adelaide, Glenelg, Norwood and North Adelaide had the depth of resources to withstand this denudation the Eagles manifestly did not. The background to the merger with Woodville which gave rise to the Woodville-West Torrens Football Club is dealt with in greater detail in the entry on that club; suffice it to say that, by 1990, with the advent of the Adelaide Crows, the continuation of the annual player drain, and the alarming drop in attendances, the only realistic alternative to amalgamation was demise.²¹⁰ While they might not have felt so at the time of the club's final ever SANFL

²⁰⁹ Matt Rendell and Steven Stretch were arguably the crème de la crème in this regard.

²¹⁰

West Torrens' Average Attendances in 5 Yearly Samples Between 1964 and 1989				
Average Attendances				
Season	Position	Thebarton	SANFL	% Diff.
1964	5th	8,890	7,569	+17.45%
1969	4th	8,133	8,512	-4.47%
1974	4th	6,194	8,732	-20.82%
1979	8th	5,752	7,796	-26.22%
1984	9th	4,969	6,570	-24.67%
1989**	6th	5,616	6,539	-14.12%

*** Although Torrens did comparatively well overall in 1989 it is perhaps worth noting that 6 of its 7 home matches for the year were lost.*

In 1990 at Football Park the Eagles averaged 5,889 in single attraction (as opposed to double header) matches, compared to a League average of 6,528. Not all of Torrens' matches at headquarters were officially designated as home games for the club, however.

match in round 20 1990 - against Woodville, ironically enough - most old time West Torrens supporters, along with the ghosts of Low, Taylor, Brown, Daviess, Karney, MacKenzie et al, would probably now accept the establishment of the Woodville-West Torrens entity as a valid repackaging, if not quite perhaps a direct continuation, of the Torrens tradition.

Torrens' First Flag

1924 SAFL Challenge Final: West Torrens vs. Sturt

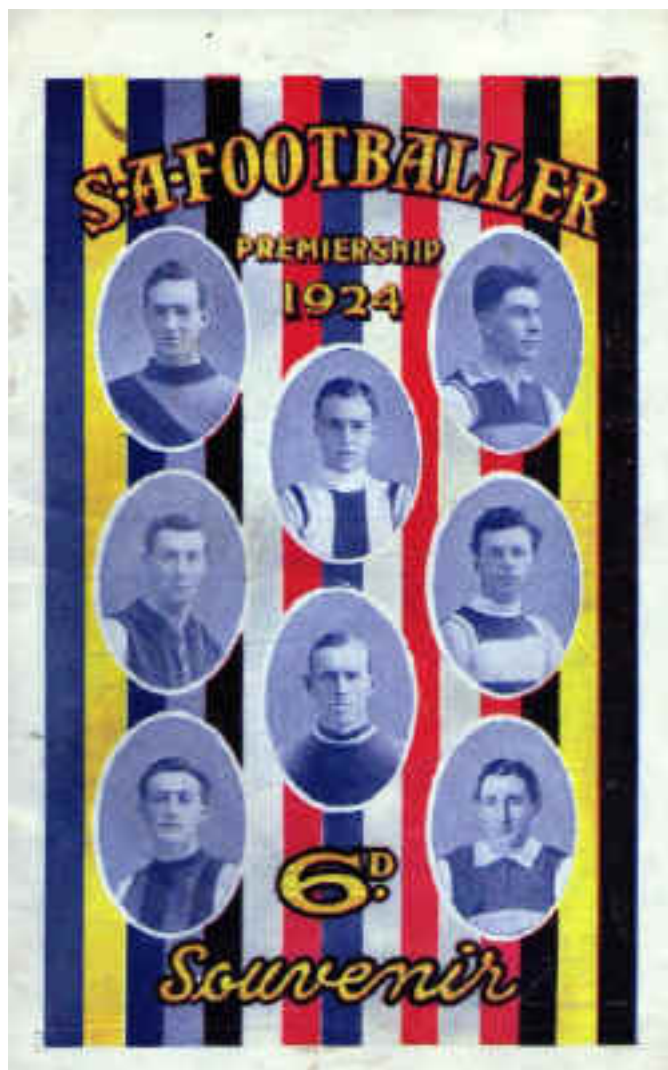
West Torrens, which was formed in 1894, had to wait until 30 years later to play off for a premiership, and even then they had to rely on the right of challenge. After qualifying for the major round in pole position with an 11-2-1 record the side played poorly in the 1st semi final against 3rd placed Norwood to go under by 15 points. As minor premiers, however, the players were then afforded the luxury of licking their wounds and sitting back for a fortnight and watching as Sturt slugged it out in the following week's semi final with Port before downing the Redlegs in the final, thereby qualifying to meet Torrens in the premiership deciding challenge final.

The Double Blues - formed almost a decade after Torrens, in 1901 - had already earned premiership honours on two previous occasions and included a solid nucleus of finals hardened competitors in their line-up.

Most pundits, perhaps predictably, lent towards the Double Blues, but Torrens, given the mediocrity of their track record, were the warmest of sentimental favourites.

The prospect of a classic 'David slays Goliath' scenario attracted a record South Australian sporting crowd of 44,300 to the Adelaide Oval and, after the blue and golds

opened well, kicking 3 goals to 1 in the first term, they were treated to a tense, closely fought game.



The sides were evenly matched but favoured contrasting styles of play. Sturt preferred a strictly traditional, kick and mark approach, while Torrens were renowned for their expedient use of the flick pass (although some claimed that their over-indulgence in this skill was a weakness).

At half time the Double Blues had narrowed the margin to 4 points, and although the blue and golds had increased this slightly to 6 points at the last change the match was still clearly in the balance. Sturt seemed to be gaining the upper hand early in the final quarter only to undermine their prospects with 5 successive behinds. Gaining confidence from this, Torrens steadied to run out winners by 8 points, 9.12 (66) to 8.10 (58).

Hollis top scored with 3 goals, while full back Daviess, ruckman Karney, rover O'Grady and half forward Adams (2 goals) all made sterling contributions. Sturt skipper Vic Richardson visited the victors changing rooms afterwards and, after offering his congratulations, offered the unusual - indeed almost unprecedented - observation that "We would have rather lost to you than any other team".

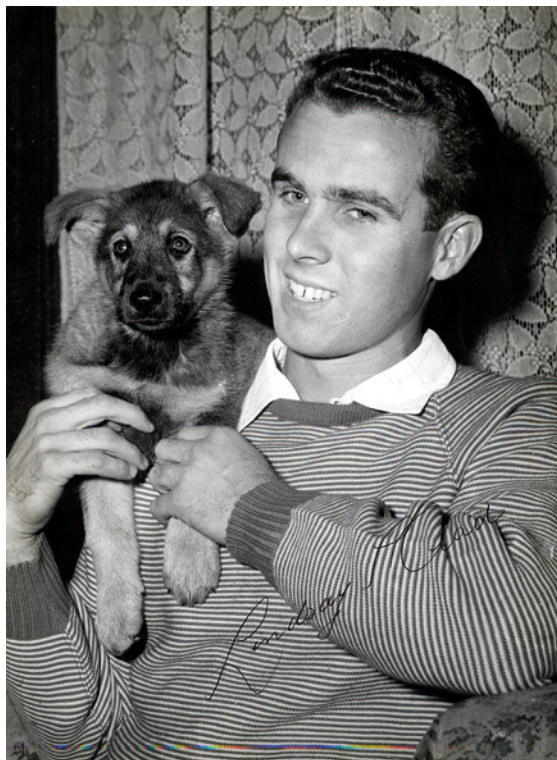
West Torrens went on to win three further premierships - in 1933, 1945 and 1953 - before merging with Woodville at the close of the 1990 season. As the Woodville-West Torrens Football Club further premierships were added in 1993, 2006 and 2011.

Torrens' Last Flag

1953 SANFL Grand Final: West Torrens vs. Port Adelaide

Football supporters under seventy years of age or so may find it hard to credit, but during the first decade after world war two West Torrens was consistently among the SANFL's pace setters. In the eight seasons between 1945 and 1952 the blue and golds finished 1st, 5th, 5th, 2nd, 2nd, 4th, 4th, and 4th, and managed an overall

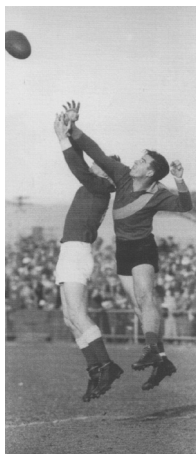
success rate of 60.8%, which was bettered only by Norwood. Thus, when the side won 15 of its 18 minor round matches in 1953 to qualify for the finals behind only Port Adelaide on percentage it was merely a case of “business as usual”.



Lindsay Head, one of the all-time greats of the game, who starred for West Torrens as an eighteen year old in the 1953 grand final defeat of Port Adelaide. It was Head's second season in league football, and he went on to play a club record 327 SANFL games.

Boasting players of the calibre of the Hank brothers - Bob, Bill and Ray - a young and copiously talented Lindsay

Head, prolific goal kicker John Willis, ferociously combative ruckman Jim Coverlid, formidable key defenders Ron Ashby and Alf Roberts, and versatile big man Mick Clingly, it was easy to see why Torrens was such a powerful combination. Coached by Joe Kinlough, the side played purposeful attacking football, characterised by swift movement of both ball and man. With few injuries during the year it was able to field a settled team that seemed to get steadily stronger as the season progressed. After losing by 13 points to Norwood at the Parade in round 9 it tuned up for the finals with 9 consecutive wins, earning itself outright premiership favouritism in most quarters.



Alf Roberts, spoiling from behind in copybook fashion.

Port Adelaide, under Fos Williams, approached the game in a very different way to West Torrens. Espousing all the key virtues of Victorian football, the Magpies were tough to the point of ruthlessness, and were far and away the best defensive side in the competition. Not that they lacked talent. Players like Geof Motley, Davey Boyd, Harold McDonald, John Abley, Roger Clift and Williams himself had as much

natural ability as any in South Australia, but that ability had always to be subordinated to the 'Magpie system'. That system was simple - beat your individual opponent, do nothing flashy or flamboyant, and approach the game with unrelenting aggression, determination and vigour. By adhering to such tenets the Magpies had finished 3rd, 1st and 3rd during Fos Williams' three seasons in charge, and were confident of taking out another flag in 1953 after finishing the minor round with 7 wins from their last 9 games.

Torrens and Port were markedly better than the other clubs in the competition in 1953 as the pre-finals ladder clearly shows:

	Points						
	W	L	D	For	Ag	%	Pts
Port Adelaide	15	3	-	1,669	1,161	58.97	30
West Torrens	15	3	-	1,822	1,305	58.26	30
Norwood	10	8	-	1,609	1,497	51.80	20
Glenelg	9	9	-	1,701	1,552	52.29	18
North Adelaide	8	10	-	1,465	1,518	49.11	16
West Adelaide	5	13	-	1,372	1,546	47.01	10
Sturt	5	13	-	1,505	1,885	44.39	10
South Adelaide	5	13	-	1,170	1,849	38.75	10

Port and Torrens had met on three occasions during the minor round. In round 2 at Thebarton, the Magpies had won a bruising encounter by 34 points, 12.16 (88) to 8.6 (54), a success they had duplicated, this time by 28 points, at the same venue in round 8. Two weeks later the sides had met again, this time at Alberton, and on this occasion, after Joe Kinlough had instructed his charges to use handball to create space and to run with ball at every opportunity, it was a different story. On an extremely windy day, Torrens ran Port

ragged in the final term to come from 19 points adrift at 'lemons' and edge home by 8 points. Ultimately, it was a match that would have a significant bearing on the destiny of the 1953 premiership.



Port's Davey Boyd.

The major round got underway on 12 September with Glenelg scoring a surprise 24 point win over Norwood in the 1st semi final. Then came an incredible 2nd semi final between Port Adelaide and West Torrens which saw the Magpies rattle on 5.5 without reply in the opening term, and stretch their lead to 42 points early in the second. By half time Torrens had still only managed 1.3 and, at 33 points adrift, looked down and out, but at half time coach Kinlough reminded his charges of the tactics that had proved so effective against Port at Alberton back in round 10. After half time, Torrens played vibrant, coherent, running football of the highest order, and the Magpies were swamped. By three quarter time the blue and golds had their noses in front at 8.3 (51) to 7.7 (49) and an emphatic last term performance saw them add 7.3 to 0.1 to win in the end with beguiling ease. Warm premiership favouritism was now assured, but no one at Thebarton was taking anything for granted, particularly after Port emphasised the immense gap which existed between the top two and the rest of the league with a commanding 17.22 (124) to 9.12 (66) preliminary final defeat of Glenelg.

On grand final day, Joe Kinlough came up with what proved to be a significant tactical innovation when he moved centre half forward Mick Clingly to a back pocket in a bid to counter the strong marking of Lloyd Zucker. In front of a crowd of 42,949, Magpie captain-coach Fos Williams won the toss and elected to kick towards the southern end of Adelaide Oval, which was favoured by a strong, 3 to 4 goal north easterly breeze.

1st Quarter

Contemporary reports described the pace of the game as the fastest in living memory. Both sides went in hard but fair from the start, with Port tending to win the aerial duels, but Torrens looking stronger when the ball was on the ground. Fos Williams was being alternately tagged (although the actual term was not yet in vogue) by Charlie Pyatt and Bill Hank, while, for good measure, Jack Carr was weighing in with some relentless sledging. Whether because of this, or for some other reason, the Port supremo never quite managed to exert his usual influence on the game.

Midway through the term Torrens led 2.1 to 1.0, but then Port, with Dave Boyd a dominant figure in the centre, hit back strongly. Deep into time-on the scores were deadlocked - as they had been on no fewer than five previous occasions during the term - but with moments to go before the siren, 'Chicken' Hayes snapped truly to give the Magpies a 6 point advantage at the first change. However, given the strength of the breeze, most observers probably felt that, on balance, it had been Torrens' quarter.

QUARTER TIME: Port Adelaide 4.3 (27); West Torrens 3.3 (21)

2nd Quarter

The second quarter was just as fiercely contested as the first, with play continually rocketing from end to end. The Magpies were still on top in the air, except when

they managed to get the ball near goal, where big, bullocking Mick Clingly was proving virtually impassable.



Bill Hank (West Torrens)

Shortly after the resumption, Torrens levelled the scores, and thereafter there was never more than a straight kick between the teams. The blue and golds had winners in ruckman Jim Coverlid, centre half back Ron Ashby, and rovers Charlie Pyatt and Jim 'Nipper' Bradford, while Port was being well served by Roger Clift at centre half back, Geof Motley on a half forward flank, Dick Russell in a back pocket, and Basil Jaggard on a wing.

Torrens finished the term strongly, and by the half time break had captured the lead by the narrowest of margins.

HALF TIME: West Torrens 6.8 (44); Port Adelaide 6.7 (43)

3rd Quarter

Hheavy rain commenced during the half time break, and continued throughout the 3rd term. Despite this, the game continued to be played at a frenetic pace, and the skill levels of both sides remained high. The defences of the respective teams - notably Clingly, Ashby and Thiele for

Torrens, and Clift, Russell and Parham for the Magpies - were well on top, and scoring opportunities were at a premium.

The wind was much less of a factor this quarter than it had been early on, and indeed it now appeared to be blowing across the ground. As the playing surface became more slippery, so the play of both sides became more aggressive and, on occasion, acrimonious. When Port back pocket Dick Russell flattened 'Nipper' Bradford with what the umpire judged to be an overly vigorous hip and shoulder, the Magpie fans whistled their indignation, as well they might given that the resultant easy goal would, in the end, more or less comprise the difference between the teams. In the short term, however, it spurred the Magpies on to enhanced effort, and they dominated play for the remainder of the quarter.



Roger Clift (Port Adelaide)

THREE QUARTER TIME: Port Adelaide 8.10 (58); West Torrens 7.10 (52)

4th Quarter

The final term proved to be one of the most thrilling seen in a South Australian grand final, either before or since. The tempo of the play remained hectic, as Port dominated the opening minutes without being able to register a major score; nevertheless, a couple of behinds gave the Magpies an 8 point advantage.



Mick Clingly of West Torrens, best afield in the '53 grand final.

Torrens' edge in pace then came to the fore and a goal to Lindsay Head followed by a near miss from Don Prior reduced the margin to a solitary point. The play then saw-sawed for several minutes, with both teams' defences on top, before a long, speculative kick from John Willis floated through for a behind to level the scores for the eleventh time in the match. Time-on was now approaching, and given the lack of scoring there were unlikely to be many minutes left.

From the kick in after Willis' point Torrens managed to lock the ball into their forward lines, and a sequence of disjointed play culminated in a snapped behind to Head. The crowd, most of whom were barracking for the blue and golds, roared its approval, but the Magpies were not finished. With barely two minutes left to play, they forced the ball deep into their forward lines. Neville Hayes collected the ball, and looked to off-load a handball into the path of Ron Leaver, who would have had the easiest of tasks to run into an open goal and score full points. However, Torrens half back flanker Frank Graham anticipated Hayes' intentions perfectly, and dashed in to intercept the ball. He then cleared to right centre wing where Errol Lodge marked before finding Doug Cockshell near centre half forward. Cockshell's kick fell well short of the pack of players waiting near the goal line, and the race was on to collect it. Running as swiftly now as he had been during the opening minutes of the 1st term, Ray Hank managed to get to the ball first and throw it desperately onto his boot. The Torrens players then watched in delight as, from a distance of about 25 metres, the ball wobbled and stuttered its way through the central uprights for a match-sealing goal. The blaring of the siren moments later heralded a mass invasion of the oval by thousands of delirious West Torrens supporters who swarmed around their heroes, and gleefully chaired skipper Bob Hank from the arena. **FINAL SCORE: West Torrens 9.13 (67); Port Adelaide 8.12 (60)**

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
West Torrens	3.3	6.8	7.10	9.13	67
Port Adelaide	4.3	6.7	8.10	8.12	60

BEST - West Torrens: Clingly, Cockshell, Coverlid, Prior, Pyatt, Bradford, Head **Port Adelaide:** Clift, Motley, Parham, Russell, Jaggard, Boyd

GOALS - West Torrens: Bradford, Head, Willis 2; Cockshell, R.Hank, Pyatt **Port Adelaide:** Dittmar, Motley, Williams 2; Hayes, Jaggard

ATTENDANCE: 42,949 at the Adelaide Oval

Postscript

By all accounts the West Torrens players' celebrations after the match were so restrained as to seem almost blasé. Match hero Mick Clingly, for example, was said to have been tucked up in bed at home by 6.30pm. Perhaps the players thought that this was likely to be one of many such successes, but in that they were gravely mistaken, as the West Torrens Football Club would never again achieve premiership glory.

Not that the club's decline into mediocrity happened overnight. The ensuing twelve seasons brought finals participation as often as not, and on at least a couple of occasions the team was strongly favoured to land the flag. The club's administration remained imaginative and ambitious; it brought the great Dick Reynolds to Thebarton as coach in 1960, for example, and managed to sign high quality interstate players such as Geoff Kingston and Bob Shearman. However, the admission to the league in 1964 of another western suburbs club in Woodville effectively sounded the Eagles' death-knell, and the last twenty-five years of their independent existence saw them waging an almost continual struggle to maintain credibility.

By contrast, Port Adelaide since 1953 has been far and away Australia's most consistently successful major club, both as Magpies and, since 1997, as the Power. Under Fos Williams the club would win an unprecedented six successive premierships between 1954 and 1959. In later decades, that winning tradition would be perpetuated by the likes of Geoff Motley, John Cahill, and Williams' sons, Stephen and Mark.

If the 1953 SANFL grand final serves to teach us anything it is that football, like life, tends to be fickle, unpredictable and capricious. Success, when it occurs, should be seized upon and enjoyed, but never allowed to

undermine ambition, for once a new season starts the previous season's achievements and failures are entirely bereft of relevance. This year's premiers can all too easily be next year's wooden spooners - or even, as in the case of the once proud West Torrens Football Club, next year's nonentities - so resting on one's laurels can never be an option, especially when you consider that success is often as much attributable to external forces outside one's control as it is to any inherent talent one might possess.

WOODVILLE - original

Formed: circa 1868

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

It is known that football matches were played at Woodville as early as 1868, although whether these matches actually involved a Woodville Football Club is unclear. The first actual references to a club bearing the name of Woodville occur in 1869.

In 1877, Woodville was a founder member of the SAFA, and was expected to acquit itself well. However, against a backdrop of emerging internal dissension the club failed to impress, winning 5 losing 9 and drawing 2 of its matches for an official final placing of 5th out of 8 clubs. Two of the losses, against Port Adelaide and Adelaide, were forfeits incurred after the club proved unable to supply a full team. During the close season, Woodville disbanded, with several of its better players joining the newly formed Norwood club. Among these was J.R. Osborn, Norwood's first captain, who led the club to the 1878-9-80 SAFA premierships. Another famous name associated with Woodville was George Giffen, who achieved even greater notoriety as a test cricket all-rounder. Like Osborn, Giffen moved to Norwood after

Woodville's demise where he had the satisfaction of kicking the Redlegs' first ever goal in the SAFA.

WOODVILLE

Home Ground: Woodville Oval

Formed: 1938

Colours: Green and gold

Emblem: Warriors (known as Woodpeckers when first admitted to the SANFL)

Senior Grade Premierships: Nil

Other Premierships: SAAFL A1 1946 (1 total); SAAFL A2 1941 (1 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1972, 1988 (2 total)

Magarey Medallists: Malcolm Blight 1972 (1 total)

All Australians: Malcolm Blight 1972 & 1985; Andrew Rogers 1987 (3 total)

League Top Goalkickers: G.Hewitt (83) 1979; M.Blight (126) 1985; S.Nichols (103) 1986 & (103) 1988 (4 total)

Highest Score: 29.11 (185) vs. West Torrens 23.13 (151) at Thebarton on 14 August 1982

Most Games: 325 by Ralph Sewer from 1969 to 1980 and 1984 to 1990

Record Home Attendance: 11,026 in round 18 1986: Woodville 14.11 (95); Port Adelaide 13.11 (89)

Record Finals Attendance: 39,066 for the 1986 1st semi final at Football Park: Woodville 18.20 (128); Port Adelaide 18.13 (121)

During its twenty-seven season stint in the SANFL Woodville's record was second to none - in terms of its mediocrity. Of a total of 575 matches played during

that period the side managed just 160 wins and 4 draws. It contested the finals just three times, with 3rd place in 1986 being its best ever effort. On the individual front, it did provide a Magarey Medallist in the shape of Malcolm Blight in 1972, while Woodville players topped the season's goalkicking on no fewer than four occasions. Woodville's only premierships successes came in the 1972 Coca Cola Cup, in which not all SANFL clubs competed, and the 1988 Escort Cup.



Bob Simunsen, dual seconds Magarey Medallist, and club champion in 3 out of Woodville's first 4 League seasons. Simunsen was also runner up to Ron Kneebone in the 1966 league Magarey Medal.

A club known as Woodville existed as long ago as 1869 when it was recorded as playing a scratch match against Adelaide on 30 July and losing by 3 goals to 1.²¹¹ Further sporadic references to Woodville followed up to and including 1877 when a club bearing that name participated in the debut season of the South Australian Football

²¹¹ See *The South Australian Football Story* by Bernard Whimpress, page 199.

Association, finishing 5th out of 8. A Woodville Football Club, about which hardly anything is known, also existed as late as 1910 but thereafter references cease for more than two decades.

In 1938, a new Woodville Football Club was formed and admitted to the Port Adelaide District Football Association in which, wearing red and white playing uniforms, it competed without success for the final two seasons of that competition's existence. In 1940 it changed its colours to purple and white and was admitted to section A2 of the South Australian Amateur Football League. Straight away, it performed with greater credibility, reaching a premiership play off in its debut season after winning 15 out of 18 minor round matches and overcoming YMCA by 15 points in a semi final.²¹² However, Walkerville were too strong in the final, winning 13.13 (91) to 8.11 (59) at SANFL club North Adelaide's home ground of Prospect Oval.

Because of the exigencies of war the number of clubs in A2 of the SAAFL was reduced from ten to six in 1941. Woodville, which played at Woodville Oval for the first time that year, won 13 out of 15 minor round matches to win the minor premiership. It then comfortably accounted for Collegians 14.10 (94) to 6.10 (46) in a semi final. In the final, played at Mortlock Oval, Woodville had to battle all the way to shake off a determined Goodwood, but steadiness under pressure ultimately paid off with a 12.7 (79) to 10.14 (74) win. Success in attaining the A2 premiership earned Woodville automatic promotion to A1, but the club had to wait until 1946 to savour the benefits of this privilege, as the SAAFL went into recess for the next four seasons owing to the war.

In 1946 the Woodville Football Club managed something which they would never achieve in twenty-seven seasons as a member of the SANFL: earned the right to call themselves the best team in an entire competition. They did it the hard way, too. After finishing the minor round in 2nd place behind University they had to overturn Semaphore Central

²¹² The SAAFL still operated a challenge system of playing finals at this point.

(12.18 to 10.15) in a semi final and Colonel Light Gardens (13.15 to 11.9) in the final before responding to the challenge which University, as minor premiers, had the right to throw down. The challenge final was a dour affair, played at SANFL side Port Adelaide's home ground of Alberton Oval, but Woodville, with Skelley, Hickman and Burns especially to the fore, did just enough to triumph. Final scores were Woodville 8.13 (61); University 9.5 (59).

Woodville remain one of only two SAAFL clubs to have won successive A2 and A1 premierships (allowing for the four year break for the war in Woodville's case). West Adelaide United, in 1935-6, were the only other club to achieve the feat.

The 1947 season saw Woodville change its colours to green and gold and go close to repeating its premiership triumph of a year earlier. However, after overcoming minor premiers Exeter at the semi final stage and Payneham in the final it was unable to overcome Exeter again in the challenge final. This was to prove to be the last ever time that Woodville would play off for the A1 premiership prior to the club's elevation to SANFL B grade status in 1959.²¹³

Woodville served a five season probationary period in B grade, reaching the finals once, in 1960, for a 3rd place finish. The twin highlights of this apprenticeship were arguably Bob Simunsen's successive Seconds Magarey Medal wins in 1961 and 1962.

In 1964, when the Woodpeckers embarked on their fully fledged SANFL career, it was Simunsen who was both their first skipper and their first interstate representative, while the coaching duties were handled by former Port Adelaide wingman Harold McDonald. Central District were admitted to the league at the same time and, in 1964, it was Woodville's ability to account for their Cinderella rivals which enabled them to avoid the wooden spoon. The 'Peckers only 3

²¹³ The chief source for the entire section on Woodville's SAAFL career was *A History of the South Australian Amateur Football League 1911-1994* by Fred Bloch.

victories for the season were all gained at the expense of the winless Bulldogs by 10, 28 and 35 points.



A young Malcom Blight seemingly has the ball to himself against North Adelaide at Prospect in 1969.

True, the side did manage to win 4 and draw 1 of its 20 minor round matches in 1966 to finish in the dizzy heights of 8th position, but overall it was rapidly becoming clear that both Woodville and fellow newcomers Central District were little better than competition makeweights.

The highlights of Woodville's SANFL career during the 1960s were arguably its draw in 1967 and its win two years later against Jack Oatey's all-conquering Sturt side. Both matches took place at Woodville Oval. The 1967 performance was especially noteworthy in that, besides the draw, the Peckers managed only a solitary win for the year en route to their second wooden spoon.

In 1968, Woodville avoided another wooden spoon by just half a game, but the following year, under the energetic coaching of former North Melbourne stalwart Noel Teasdale, the side seemed to be at last on the verge of establishing itself. A total of 8 wins from 20 starts earned the comparative respectability of 7th place on the ladder and over the final few games of the season in particular, inspired by Teasdale, and with players like carnival ruckman Craig McKellar, experienced stalwarts Simunsen and Barrie Barbary, and exciting youngsters such as Ray Huppatz, Colin MacVicar, Malcolm Blight and Ralph Sewer, all of whom would be automatic inclusions in any Woodville 'Hall of Fame', they looked capable of matching it with the very best. Sadly, however, 1970 did not see the club build on this platform. Despite winning 5 of its first 10 games to be in with an outside chance of finals contention it wilted during the second half of the season, managing just 1 further win to finish in 9th place.

Things deteriorated still further in 1971 as the 'Peckers plummeted to the wooden spoon, and although this particular indignity was avoided during the rest of the 1970s it was only towards the end of the decade that the club began to give serious on field indications that it could be anything other than an also ran. In the meantime, a succession of home grown champions - McKellar, Huppatz and Blight - went off

across the border in search of the mythological VFL pot of gold.



Lindsay Heaven, 227 games for Woodville between 1970 and 1985, plus the 1981 club best and fairest award.

In 1978, for the first ever time, Woodville made a realistic bid to participate in the finals, ultimately missing out by just one game plus percentage. The following year, however, finally brought the long awaited breakthrough as the 'Peckers won 10 out of 22 minor round matches to snatch 5th spot from North Adelaide on percentage. However, having qualified for the elimination final the Woodville players may have subconsciously decided that they had achieved enough for one season; in any event, they were never in the contest against reigning premier Norwood and went under by 11 goals. Nevertheless, there was always next season.

Except that, as so often appears to be the case, 'next season' after a season of apparent promise proved to be an enormous disappointment. The 'Peckers managed only 4

wins for the year and sustained some of the biggest hidings in their history to slump to the bottom of the ladder once more.

Between 1980 and 1985 Woodville collected an unenviable six successive wooden spoons to create a new SANFL record (since surpassed by Sturt). Not even a change of emblem in 1982 from the admittedly whimpish 'Woodpeckers' to the ostensibly more macho Warriors could arrest the decline; after all, it is "the men inside the guernseys that count".²¹⁴

Similarly, the return to the Woodville fold as playing coach a year later of 'favourite son' Malcolm Blight did not immediately succeed in turning things 'round. Initially at least, Blight's impact was greater on the playing side than it was as a tactician and man motivator. In 1985, his final season as a player, Blight was named as an All Australian for the second time (the first had been 'way back in 1972) and topped the SANFL goalkicking list with 126 goals for the year. He was also one of the pre-count favourites for the Magarey Medal, but finished a somewhat disappointing 10th.

The following year, with Blight the player now history, Blight the coach finally came into his own. Indeed, 1986 was to prove to be the single most successful season in the entire history of the Woodville Football Club. In hindsight it is possible to suggest that Blight expected such success. Prior to the start of the season he observed:

*"I'm comfortable, but there are a lot of reasons for that. Off the ground things have certainly sharpened up at Woodville. I've always believed and hammered home at Woodville that you have got to get your act in order off the ground first - that means from administration down to players..... In the past three years I've been hoping like hell that things would go well. There's been a lot more planning and preparation this year so I'm not hoping as much this time because I know things are going to be better."*²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Observation made at the time of the emblem switch by Whimpress, op cit, page 202.

²¹⁵ Quoted in *Football Times Yearbook 1986*, pages 6-7.

Such confidence appeared grossly misplaced early on as the side won only 2 out of 5 Escort Cup pre-season games. Then, after commencing the season proper promisingly with a hard fought 5 point win over West Torrens at Football Park, old habits promptly resurfaced and 7 of the next 9 matches were lost.



Michael Templeton

The turning point came in round 11 against Centrals, again at Football Park. Since entering the league together the two clubs had enjoyed an intense and unique rivalry; it hardly seemed to matter what the respective positions of the sides on the ladder were, their confrontations over a season almost invariably tended to be closely fought. Not so this time. The Warriors simply overwhelmed their opposition to win with consummate ease, 27.20 (182) to 11.15 (81). The following week saw Woodville do the unimaginable: down ladder leaders and firm flag favourites North Adelaide by 3 points at

Woodville Oval. South Adelaide were the next side to succumb to the new-found wrath of the Warriors, going down by 37 points at Football Park, only for Glenelg to throw a temporary spanner into the works in round 14 with a 39 point triumph at the Bay.

This setback only served to spark the Warriors into renewed resolve. The next seven minor round matches represented one of the pinnacles of Woodville's twenty-seven season involvement in the SANFL at senior level, with victories over Sturt (31 points), Norwood (21 points), West Adelaide (23 points), Port Adelaide (6 points), West Torrens (45 points), Central District (22 points) and North Adelaide (18 points).

All Woodville needed to do now in order to clinch the double chance in the finals was defeat wooden spoon contender South Adelaide in the final minor round match of the season. Inexplicably, however - or should that be predictably? - the players effectively 'froze', putting in a woeful performance to lose by 15 points and slump to 4th, earning an elimination final meeting with finals-hardened Norwood.

"Woodville's Acid Test" ran the headline to Mike Rucci's story in the pre-finals issue of South Australia's weekly football newspaper 'Football Times'. Rucci then proceeded to sit fairly and squarely on the fence when analysing Woodville's prospects:

Woodville, which has qualified for the finals for the second time since it was re-admitted (sic.) to the league series in 1964, enters the finals series far better prepared than its previous major round appearance in 1979 - ironically against Norwood in an elimination final. But one thing hasn't changed - Woodville still lack finals experience. And there lies the tragedy of the 'form' side of the competition missing the double chance. Had the young Woodville players been given the chance to play in a final - just to get the feel of playing in the big time - they would be a better proposition for the grand final. That is Woodville's penalty for starting the season so poorly..... Woodville - and the tactics of Blight and assistant

*coach John Reid - can beat Norwood. Whether it does win is in the hands of the 20 men Blight chooses to determine his destiny.*²¹⁶

Given the nature of their brief, the five official tipsters in 'Football Times' had no choice but to be less non-committal: all predicted a narrow win to the Redlegs.

They had reckoned without the Warriors' intense desperation and desire, coupled with the pace of players like Colin McDonald, Ron Fuller and Kevin Harris, and the aerial ability of Michael Templeton and Andrew Taylor. All these factors were to the fore as Woodville led at every change in compiling a resounding 43 point win. Full forward Stephen Nichols booted 5 goals, with Templeton and Taylor bagging 3 apiece, while Kevin Harris, with 21 possessions, was best on ground.

The 'Football Times' tipsters had changed their tune prior to Woodville's 1st semi final meeting with Port Adelaide, with 4 of the 5 favouring the Warriors. At quarter time their confidence appeared to be seriously misplaced. Watched by a crowd of 39,086, the biggest to witness a 1st semi final since 1967, and indeed the largest crowd that Woodville was ever to appear in front of,²¹⁷ Port opened with all guns blazing to register 9 opening term goals to 3 and seemingly have one foot firmly in the preliminary final. Blight's charges refused to lie down, however, and by half time, incredibly, they had closed to within just 5 points. The 3rd term had the huge crowd at fever pitch as the two sides went goal for goal with the Magpies hanging on to a 6 point advantage at the final change. The 4th quarter was just as thrilling, but gradually it was the Warriors who appeared to be getting on top. In the end, only inaccuracy in front of goal prevented Woodville from winning with comparative comfort, but margins mean little in finals; there are only winners and losers. On this occasion, the scoreboard clearly showed the green and golds as winners.

²¹⁶ 'Football Times', volume 11, number 26, 11/9/86, page 2.

²¹⁷ Discounting grand final curtain raisers played by reserves sides.

Final scores were 18.20 (128) to 18.13 (121), with Ron Fuller the best player on view.

"When assessing Woodville it is difficult to know where you might be able to exploit a weakness in its game," suggested Sturt coach Merv' Keane in his post match analysis. "At the moment, it hasn't got an obvious one for any length of time. For example, if Stephen Nichols is getting beaten at full forward for a quarter, Ralph Sewer or Michael Templeton will bob up with a goal or two. Or if Ron Fuller is down, Colin McDonald or John Martin will rise to the occasion and tear through the centre to open up the forward line again."²¹⁸

Woodville's preliminary final opponents Glenelg, by contrast, were looking distinctly out of sorts, having lost badly to North Adelaide in the 2nd semi final. In the event, after a hard fought first half, the Bays proved to be just a little too accomplished for Blight's men and won by 21 points in front of another big finals crowd of 30,744. The Warriors were far from disgraced, however, and there appeared to be every reason for those connected with the club to feel optimistic about prospects for 1987.

Woodville began the following season strongly, reaching the Escort Cup grand final only to lose narrowly to West Adelaide. Once the season proper got underway the side continued much as it had left off in 1986 and by the time it downed South Adelaide by a couple of goals in round 17 finals participation was virtually assured. Thereafter, however, the 'old' Woodville inexplicably resurfaced: the Warriors lost every one of their last five minor round matches before being consummately bundled out of the premiership race by Glenelg to the embarrassing tune of 102 points.

Malcolm Blight left at the end of the 1987 season and was replaced as coach by another South Australian football legend in the shape of the only four time Magarey Medallist, Russell Ebert. Although the club was to undergo a gradual overall decline during Ebert's three years in charge it did

²¹⁸ 'Football Times', volume 11, number 28, 25/9/86, page 6.

achieve one significant feat: in 1988 it achieved the first and only senior SANFL premiership in its history after downing Port Adelaide in the Escort Cup grand final by 45 points. As far as the serious business of winning league matches was concerned, however, the club went steadily backwards, winning 9 of its 22 games in 1988 for 7th position, 8 in 1989 (8th), and 7 in 1990 (8th again). For most of this three year period it was clear that the club was living on borrowed time, and while the formation of the Adelaide Crows at the end of the 1990 season may have precipitated matters, the merger with West Torrens which produced the Woodville-West Torrens Eagles in 1991 may, in hindsight, be viewed as having been almost inevitable. The merger effectively marked the death knell of the Woodville Football Club as an autonomous organisation, and from that point of view was probably regarded in a negative light by many of the club's supporters, at least initially. However, given that the merged entity took only three seasons to etch its name on the SANFL roll of honour by winning a senior flag, such negativity soon appeared to be misplaced. Moreover, and without at all wanting to seem unkind, it is hard to imagine any alternative set of circumstances which would have given rise to the word 'Woodville' being engraved on the Thomas Seymour Hill Trophy.

Pecker Power

Woodville Oval, Saturday 23rd August 1969

Over the course of its twenty-eight season stint in the SANFL Woodville's name became almost a byword for ignominy. Indeed, in some circles the club was a veritable laughing stock. The team, which began life in 1964 as the Woodpeckers before becoming the Warriors in 1982, finished in the bottom two premiership placings no fewer than sixteen times, including nine wooden spoons. It made the finals on

three occasions, but only once managed to register more wins in a season than losses. Of the twenty heftiest hidings handed out in senior SANFL competition between 1964 and 1990,

Woodville was the recipient of half a dozen. A composite ladder of the ten clubs' minor round results during the same period seemingly provides compelling evidence of Woodville's unparalleled ineptitude:

	W	L	D	Points
Port Adelaide	401	164	5	807
Glenelg	350	215	5	705
Sturt	349	217	4	702
Norwood	318	245	7	643
North Adelaide	316	252	2	634
Central District	245	320	5	495
West Adelaide	243	320	7	493
South Adelaide	234	332	4	472
West Torrens	212	354	4	428
Woodville	158	408	4	320

Presented thus, in the raw, such statistics and facts do indeed make sorry reading. But there are times when it pays to look behind ostensible 'facts', and to assess them not according to a rudimentary, standardised value system, but in terms of the unique constraints and circumstances under which they were generated.

Past Encounters

Prior to their round nineteen clash at Woodville Oval on Saturday 23rd August 1969 Woodville and Sturt had played one another a dozen times, with the Blues victorious on all but one occasion. The exception had occurred at Woodville Oval in round eighteen 1967, when the 'Peckers had achieved a sensational and improbable draw to earn one of only three premiership points attained in an

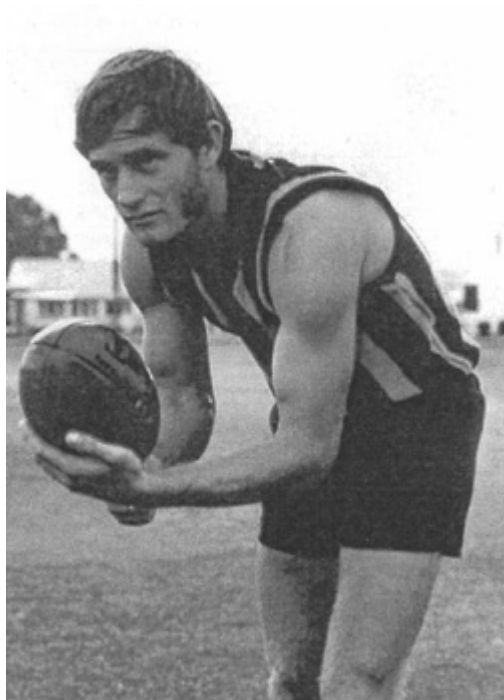
otherwise entirely disastrous season. In the remaining eleven encounters between the two sides the Double Blues' superiority had been appreciable, with their average margin of victory 59.6 points. Given that Sturt had been one of the strongest clubs in the competition over the preceding five seasons, and Woodville arguably the weakest, this was scarcely surprising. However, the average football supporter's perception of the difference in status between the two clubs arguably went still further, with the 'Peckers (and, to some extent, their fellow 1964 initiates Central District) being viewed as not yet up to league standard. This attitude came through quite forcibly in press accounts of their matches. Moreover, the fact that Woodville's and Centrals' games were hardly ever adjudged worthy of TV coverage (and this at a time when three of the five matches were replayed every Saturday night), speaks volumes.

For Woodville versus Sturt then, read Norwood versus the Adelaide Crows, or Port Magpies versus the Power. In all but name, the clubs were perceived as being in different leagues.

The Lie Of The Land

Of the 39,478 spectators who patronised SANFL matches on 23rd August only 5,353 were at Oval Avenue for the comparatively inconsequential Woodville-Sturt clash. Just about the only interest attaching to it was the fact that the Blues would, by winning (as almost everyone assumed they would), virtually assure themselves of the double chance in the finals for the fourth season in a row. Elsewhere, much more interest was focused on Thebarton Oval where fifth placed West Torrens on 12 wins and 6 defeats, and in pursuit of a ninth successive win, played host to North Adelaide (13-5), with a possible place in the 'four' hinging on the outcome. For Torrens, it was virtually tantamount to a last hurrah: twenty-one years later the club would merge with Woodville as both clubs ruefully acknowledged that the lie of the land had been irreversibly

transformed in such a way as to make autonomous success for either of them unachievable.



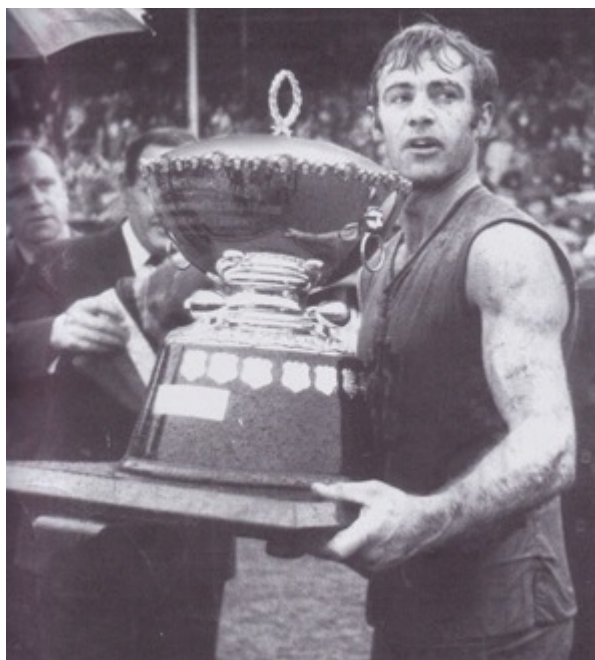
Woodville rover Ray Huppertz.

An Inconclusive Opening Phase

With Bob Scholefield, in his second season as a league umpire, officiating, Sturt captain Bob Shearman won the toss and opted for first use of a spasmodic 2-3 goal breeze.

The ground was firm and dry, the weather sunny and mild, with many of the male spectators having dispensed with winter garb in favour of shirt sleeves.

Key match-ups were expected to be Shearman versus Allen in the centre, the roving duel between Nunan and Huppatz, and the confrontation of the two sides' promising young ruckmen, Greg Wild for Sturt, and Craig McKellar for the Woodpeckers. In addition, Woodville full back Goode would need to be at his very best to contain Sturt's in-form full forward Malcolm Greenslade, whose tally of 62 goals for the year placed him second on the league list behind Glenelg's "Freddy" Phillis.



Sturt skipper Bob Shearman accepts the 1970 SANFL premiership trophy.

The all-round strength of the Sturt line-up was evidenced by the inclusion of no fewer than half a dozen

players who had played carnival football earlier in the season. By contrast, Woodville's only 1969 state representative had been Craig McKellar. The Blues' pedigree was further highlighted by their wealth of experience, with half of their starting eighteen having played in excess of 100 senior games, compared to five for the 'Peckers.

However, the Woodville team boasted plenty of promising young talent, including Malcolm Blight, a dynamic, highly skilled, occasionally spectacular ruck-rover; strong marking key position forward Colin MacVicar; and a pair of incisively damaging half forward flankers in John Cummins and Ralph Sewer.



Woodville's Ralph Sewer.

As is often the case, the opening minutes of play gave no real indication of what sort of match was to materialise as Sturt attacked continuously, and with a fluency and ease that suggested a yawning disparity in talent between the two sides.

Right from the opening bounce the Blues surged forward and Shearman, with trademark precision, hit Greenslade on the chest with a long, searing pass. The Sturt full forward coolly registered his 63rd major of the season, which was supplemented a couple of minutes later by Ottens who had been awarded a somewhat questionable free after Teasdale's hurried clearing kick over the boundary was deemed to have been deliberate.

Almost without needing to try, Sturt was 2 goals to the good, but then the 'Peckers gave the first indication that things were not necessarily going to pan out as per the supposed script. With veteran wingman Barrie Barbary a telling influence in the middle of the ground, and half forward flankers Sewer and Cummins repeatedly proving too quick and elusive for their direct opponents in Brooks and Short, Woodville gradually began to gain the initiative, and midway through the term a couple of quick goals to MacVicar put the flesh on their superiority.

The remainder of the quarter was evenly contested with both sides managing to trouble the scorers three more times. The Blues, however, were unerringly accurate, whereas the 'Peckers let their opponents off the hook by missing a couple of easy ones. Nevertheless, considering the presumed value of the breeze, a 10 point deficit at the first change was by no means alarming.

QUARTER TIME: Sturt 5.0 (30); Woodville 3.2 (20)

Blues On Top

Woodville commenced the second term with a swift, incisive forward thrust that culminated in a goal to Hansch. With the exception of Adcock, who was

keeping a tight rein on Woodville's resting rovers, all the Sturt backmen were being given the runaround to a certain extent at this stage. In particular, 'Pecker' centre half forward Ray Buckley appeared too strong both in the air and at ground level for his more highly rated opponent in 'Sandy' Nelson, while purposeful, sprightly half forward flanker John Cummins was giving Terry Short, normally one of the league's most reliable backmen, a proverbial "bath".



Barrie Barbary of Woodville, pictured during his time with North Adelaide.

Fortunately for Sturt, Woodville failed to capitalise on their significant territorial superiority, and the next goal, when it arrived, went to the Double Blues as Heffernan made no mistake from close range after his team's first serious attacking foray of the quarter. Woodville responded determinedly, but with minimal effect. On a couple of occasions Garry Edwards, deep in attack and with ample time and space either to pick out a target or go for goal, delivered

the ball straight to a Sturt opponent, and then McKellar, after marking superbly, brought up only one flag from point blank range.



'Pecker wingman Rodney Allen.

The 'Peckers appeared to drop their heads somewhat after this, or perhaps it was a case of Sturt's greater experience starting to tell, as during the last ten minutes of the quarter the Double Blues attacked relentlessly. Heffernan, perhaps inspired by his goal, began to look impressively imposing, while Nunan, arguably the most intelligently creative footballer in South Australia at this point in time, repeatedly emphasised that status with a succession of immaculately telling disposals by both foot and hand. The Blues' resurgence was capped by late goals to Heffernan and Greenslade, giving them a dangerous-looking 25 point advantage at the long break.

Woodville's fans had seen it all before. For the better part of two quarters their team had shown commendable pluck and no small amount of skill to all but match it with one

of the league's heavyweights. Those same supporters knew the second half script by heart. The last ten minutes of the second term had been but a prelude. Gradually but inexorably the men in green and gold jumpers would accept what they had struggled so manfully for a time to ignore, which was the fact that defeat was inevitable. The longer the match went on, the less resistance they would manufacture, and the easier their opponents would have things. Well before the end, the Woodville players would be desperately craving the final siren, while the team's supporters would be making their dejected way towards the exits.

HALF TIME: Sturt 8.4 (52); Woodville 4.3 (27)

Teaser Ups The Ante

In 1969 Sturt would claim the fourth of an eventual five straight flags. However, the Blues were by no means the dominant force they had been at the beginning of their reign. In particular, the Sturt of 1969 was a markedly less resilient combination than its counterparts of two or three years earlier. On several occasions during the season - most notably against Glenelg in round three at the Bay, and Torrens at Thebarton in round sixteen - the Blues had wilted badly under fire, something which their teams of 1966 and 1967 conspicuously, if not quite a hundred per cent consistently, failed to do. In the 1969 championship of Australia match Sturt's normally highly drilled, super-efficient players, faced by one of the most ruthlessly aggressive combinations in football history in the shape of Richmond, would fumble and stutter their way to a defeat of the most ignoble, emphatic kind, one in which the margin - a hefty 53 points - actually flattered them considerably.

Woodville captain-coach Noel Teasdale was well aware of the Double Blues' deficiencies, and admirably placed to exploit them. Although he had spent almost his entire fourteen season league football career playing for losing teams he was not disposed to take this state of affairs lying down. Indeed, lying down was what most of Teasdale's

opponents tended to end up doing after crossing swords with the flamboyantly combative former North Melbourne ruckman.



Woodville ruckman Fred Hansch.

Right from the opening bounce of the third term, 'Teaser' was in inspirational mood, repeatedly using his body as the equivalent of a human battering ram to set up opportunities for his team mates, some of whom followed suit by displaying similarly focused aggression, and others of whom benefited by pouncing on the resultant loose balls and driving their team deep into attack. The entire Woodville half back line of Simunsen, Syvertsen and Ogilvie was especially prominent, collectively displaying too much dash and old fashioned ginger for their opponents, and using the ball to telling effect time and time again. It was a similar story across half forward where Sewer, Buckley and Cummins were proving too sprightly and, in the case of Buckley, too powerful for their direct opponents in Brooks, Nelson and Short. In an effort to patch things up, Oatey swapped wingman Brian Martin with Brooks, and while this had the short term effect of quietening Sewer the downside was that Woodville wingman Edwards started to see more of the ball. On the other wing, Barrie Barbary, completely unsighted in the second quarter,

exploded into life to pick up eleven telling possessions and give the 'Peckers another clear winner.

Territorially and in terms of possession of the football the 'Peckers completely dominated the third term, and they ought by rights to have been ahead at the final change. However, a couple of misses from point blank range deep into time on let Sturt off the hook, and it was the Blues who went into the three quarter time huddle with the narrowest of advantages.

THREE QUARTER TIME: Sturt 8.8 (56); Woodville 8.7 (55)

'Pecker Power!

In a bid to regain the initiative Sturt implemented the tried and tested measure of switching Schoff to the centre, with Shearman, who had been struggling somewhat since receiving a heavy knock during the third term, going to Paul Bagshaw's half forward flank. Bagshaw was shifted across to the centre half forward position vacated by Schoff. Of the three moves only that of Schoff to the pivot could be adjudged even a partial success with Shearman continuing to struggle and Bagshaw failing to collect a single possession for the quarter as Syvertsen repeatedly ran off him to damaging effect.

With Teasdale still performing with Herculean intensity the final quarter was in many respects a carbon copy of the third. The only area in which the Blues managed to match their opponents was in the ruck, with Ottens in particular displaying good form. However, away from the actual ruck contests the Woodville big men were superior, with Teasdale alone picking up fourteen grabs, eight of them in the last term. The 'Peckers also displayed considerable aerial superiority ahead of centre with Buckley, MacVicar and Cummins in particular consistently outmarking their direct opponents.

In adding 4 goals to 1 over the concluding half hour of the match the Woodpeckers emphatically proved that, man for

man, they more than had Sturt's measure, and although their final margin of victory was only 19 points it ought, on the balance of play after half time, have been much greater.

FINAL SCORE: Woodville 12.11 (83); Sturt 9.10 (64)

BEST - Woodville: Simunsen, Barbary, Cummins, Teasdale, Buckley, Syvertsen, Allen, Ogilvie

Sturt: Nunan, Adcock, Ottens, Heffernan, Chessell

SCORERS - Woodville: MacVicar 5.2; Cummins, Hansch 1.2; Christie, Sewer 1.1; Allen, Barbary, Blight 1.0; Edwards, McKellar 0.1; rushed 0.1 **Sturt:** Greenslade 4.1; Heffernan 2.1; Ottens 2.0; Tilbrook 1.4

ATTENDANCE: 5,353 at Woodville Oval

WOODVILLE-WEST TORRENS

Club Address: P.O. Box 31, Woodville, South Australia 5011

Website: www.wwtfc.com.au

Home Ground: Woodville Oval

Formed: 1990, through the merger of the Woodville and West Torrens Football Clubs

Colours: Blue, green and gold

Emblem: Eagles

Senior Grade Premierships: 1993, 2006, 2011 (2 total)

Other Premierships: Stanley H. Lewis Memorial Trophy 1993, 2000, 2013 (3 total); SANFL Night/Knock-out/Pre-season Series 1993-4 (2 total)

Magarey Medallists: Nil

League Top Goalkickers: S.Morphett (99) 1991; C.Kluzek (72) 2000; M.Passador (79) 2006 (3 total)

Highest Score: 30.14 (194) vs. North Adelaide on 16 April 1994

Most Games: 269 by Justin Cicoella 1998 to 2012

Record Finals Attendance: 42,719 for 1993 grand final at Football Park: Woodville-West

Few decisions made by the SANFL over the years have been more controversial than that which saw the introduction in 1964 of two new league football clubs, Woodville and Central District, thereby taking the total number of clubs in the competition to ten. Many had argued that, given the resources and population of the state, eight clubs rather than ten should be viewed as an optimum number, and that spreading the talent more thinly would only lead to a diminution in the overall standard and a broadening of the gulf between strong and weak.

Critics of the decision to admit Centrals and Woodville to league ranks were, if anything, more dubious about the latter's claims to such status. The inclusion of Centrals, it was acknowledged, would have the beneficial side effect of bolstering the game's development in Adelaide's northernmost suburbs, an area which hitherto had possessed no clubs of league status, and where the population was known to be rapidly increasing. Woodville, on the other hand, was situated in a part of central Adelaide where the population was declining and which was already home to two established league clubs, West Adelaide and West Torrens. The inclusion of a third league club in such an area would certainly appear difficult to justify, and while this is not the appropriate place for a detailed analysis of the rights and wrongs of the situation, a brief comparison of the fortunes of West Adelaide and West Torrens prior to and after the SANFL's expansion in 1964 would appear to bear out the scepticism of those who originally condemned that expansion.

The performances of West Adelaide and West Torrens worsened appreciably after the inception of the ten

team format, while perhaps the most charitable thing which could be said about Woodville is that they were never really a force.²¹⁹



Andrew Rogers

Further potency is given to the argument when you examine the respective performances of West Adelaide and Woodville-West Torrens since the establishment of the latter club in 1991. Although it was probably too early for the effect to have been anything other than coincidental it is interesting

²¹⁹ Between 1907 and 1963 Torrens achieved a success rate of 52.7% and West managed 50.8%. In stark contrast, from 1964 to 1990 those rates fell to 37.7% for Torrens and 43.3% for West. Over the entire course of the club's existence Woodville's success rate was a meagre 28.2%.

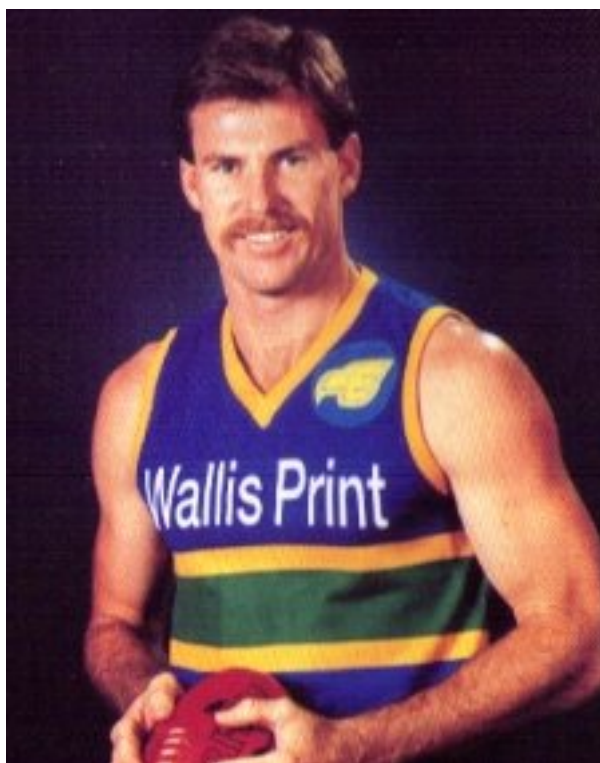
to note that West Adelaide immediately proceeded to make the grand final for only the third time in thirty years. Their performance since then has been somewhat more modest (although they have reached another two grand finals) but, as they have frequently demonstrated, they remain fully capable of overturning any other side in the league on their day. (Paradoxical evidence of this is afforded by the fact that, during the period 1991-1994, they were one of only two SANFL clubs to achieve a positive win-loss ratio against Woodville-West Torrens.)



Bruce Winter

The newly formed Eagles, coached by ex-Norwood supremo Neil Balme, were initially at least a force to be reckoned with. They reached the major round in each of their

first two seasons, and, arguably, only finals inexperience prevented their making more of an impact. In 1993, with Bruce Winter having replaced Balme as coach (Balme having joined Melbourne), the side swept all before it, however, exhibiting an exhilarating brand of team football throughout the minor round before effortlessly overcoming reigning premiers Port Adelaide 14.20 (104) to 4.6 (30) in the 2nd semi final.



Scott Morphet, top goalkicker in the SANFL in 1991 with 99 goals.

There were some who still doubted the side's pedigree, however, suggesting that the combination of a fervid grand final atmosphere and a finals hardened opponent in the shape of Norwood would ultimately prove too overwhelming. In the event, though, it was the Redlegs who were overwhelmed; the Eagles assumed control from the very first bounce, with Andrew Taylor having a goal on the board inside the opening minute, and thereafter never relaxed their grip en route to a resounding 73 point win. The cornerstones of the victory included Jack Oatey Medallist Steven Sziller, who roved splendidly and tenaciously all afternoon, ruck rover Wayne Weidemann, who clearly outpointed Redleg dangerman Garry McIntosh, half back flanker Jamie Tape, who booted his only goal of the season during the 2nd term, and effervescent wingman Shane Breuer, playing his final game for the Eagles before heading to Geelong.

The Eagles in 1994 were arguably an even stronger combination than a year earlier, but the vagaries of football are such that the best and strongest teams do not invariably end up winning premierships. Because of the way in which Australian football competitions are structured, a single lapse in concentration can mean the difference between securing the ultimate prize, or seeing a whole season's worth of effort, sweat, dedication and fortitude disappear down the proverbial drain. When the Eagles kicked the opening 6 goals in the 1st quarter of the 1994 SANFL grand final against Port Adelaide the last thing that looked to be on the cards was a lapse in concentration, and even when the Magpies added a couple of late goals to reduce the quarter time margin to 22 points there was nothing in the pattern of the game to suggest what was to come. Neither was there in a 2nd term which saw both sides add 2.3, or even indeed in a 3rd quarter which saw Port, despite a measurable lift in intensity, cohesion and controlled aggression, manage only 2.6 to the Eagles' 1.2. Suddenly, however, and quite inexplicably, during the final term Port Adelaide found easily its best form for the entire season, with the Eagles coincidentally ploughing previously unprecedented depths, and what had been a tight, hard fought contest was transformed into a veritable procession, with the Magpies

doing virtually as they pleased to rattle on 9.3 to 1.2 and win with an ease that was as arrogantly consummate as it was confounding. The disbelief which engulfed everyone connected with the Eagles was to take the better part of five years to dissipate fully.



“Birdman” Burton, flying low on this occasion.

Between 1995 and 1998 the Eagles contested the finals only once, for a 4th place finish in 1996. At times their performances elicited traumatic memories in the minds of both strands of the club's supporters, memories of an era which they fervently hoped, and in many cases genuinely believed, would never need to be re-visited. The side's premiership coach, Bruce Winter, made way for former West Adelaide, Brisbane and Adelaide player Mark Mickan in 1998 and there was gradual improvement with the side finishing 6th and 3rd during his two years in charge.

As the turn of the century approached, a fresh optimism was evident at Oval Avenue. In season 2000, with Paul Hamilton at the coaching helm, the Eagles looked to have an excellent chance of recapturing premiership honours as they topped the ladder after the minor round with a 17-3 record. Players like Gavin Colville, Chris Kluzek, Jon Floreani, David Neimann, Nick Pesch and Adam Pearce enabled the team to perform with both consistency and panache, and in the eyes of a majority of pundits they were a clear flag favourite.

The true test of an Australian football club's pedigree comes at finals time, however, and when the ante was upped in season 2000 the Eagles were found wanting, albeit not by much. Second semi final opponents Central District had yet to record a senior SANFL premiership and it may have been that this instilled in them an extra hunger and, when the pressure intensified during the 2nd half, a greater resilience. In any event, the Bulldogs won a high standard, thoroughly absorbing tussle by 18 points, 15.9 (99) to 12.9 (81).

The Eagles therefore needed to beat a fast improving Sturt side in order to qualify for the premiership decider but they managed this with something to spare, creating a consensus of opinion that they would be better for the additional hit out. Certainly, as far as most pundits were concerned, the destiny of the 2000 Thomas Seymour Hill Trophy was now 'line ball'.

On a wet, blustery afternoon in front of a disappointing crowd of just 34,819 the Eagles and Central District staged a dour, unspectacular tussle in the 2000 SANFL grand final, with the Eagles holding their own in until half time before ultimately, perhaps inevitably, succumbing to a mounting tidal wave of northern suburb determination, fervour and craving. Central District eventually got home by 22 points, 8.13 (60) to 5.9 (39) in the lowest scoring SANFL grand final since 1979. However, at least this time, unlike in 1994, it had been a respectable reversal, one from which the club emerged with its dignity, and to some extent its reputation, intact. Jamie Tape, Andrew Rogers and Stephen

Hall were among several Eagles players with no reason to feel abashed when the final siren sounded.



Justin Cicolella

Season 2001, with Ron Fuller having replaced Paul Hamilton as coach, brought a second consecutive grand final appearance. Once again the opposition was provided by Central District, and once again, on another highly inclement, windswept afternoon, it was the Bulldogs who eventually emerged triumphant. This time, however, there was a good deal less conviction about the Eagles' display, and the eventual margin of 39 points was probably, if anything, a trifle kind to the losers. With the lowest ever post-war SANFL grand final crowd of 26,378 in attendance Centrals won 10.11 (71) to 4.8 (32), prompting somewhat more post-match soul searching on the part of the Eagles hierarchy than twelve months earlier.

Season 2002 brought a marginal decline in fortunes as the Eagles finished 4th after comfortably overcoming West Adelaide in the elimination final but succumbing by 2 points to Norwood in the 1st semi. The side improved by one place in 2003, bowing out to West Adelaide by 30 points in the preliminary final after earlier accounting for Sturt.

For much of the 2004 season, the Eagles seemed well on course for a possible second senior flag. After qualifying for the finals comfortably, they easily accounted for Sturt on the first weekend of the finals, before doing everything but win against Central District in the 2nd semi. Another impressive win over the Double Blues in the preliminary final then catapulted the Eagles into their third grand final in five seasons, with most observers expecting a tough, bruising, closely fought match. Alas, it was anything but, as Centrals raced to the biggest win in SANFL grand final history, 23.15 (153) to an almost unimaginably dire 4.4 (28). The Eagles were not just beaten, they were thoroughly and emphatically humiliated, with the only bright spot being the fact that there were only 24,207 spectators - the smallest grand final crowd since 1930 - there to see it.

The 2005 season brought an immediate chance of revenge for the Eagles, who once again faced Centrals in the grand final, but although they were much more competitive than a year earlier, they ultimately succumbed by 28 points, prompting many observers to suggest that they would be forced to undergo a period of rebuilding before being in a position to mount a realistic premierships challenge once more. Such predictions proved completely ill-founded, however, as the Eagles surged to the 2006 minor premierships with an authority and a conviction that saw them irrevocably installed as flag favourites. After that, a 2nd semi final loss to Central District was disappointing, but in hindsight it can be seen as serving a purpose in reminding the players of the enhanced intensity of finals football. A hard fought 7 point win over North Adelaide in the preliminary final served to reinforce the lesson, and in the grand final re-match with Centrals the Eagles were simply irrepressible, dominating right from the opening bounce en route to a resounding 76 point victory. Final scores were 17.19 (121) to 7.3 (45), and if the bitter memories of four grand final losses to the Bulldogs had not been entirely obliterated, they had at least been assuaged.

In 2007, the Eagles' general performance level discernibly dropped a notch or two, and although they made

the finals comfortably enough, they were unable to get past North Adelaide in either the qualifying final or the preliminary final, and in the end had to be satisfied with 3rd place on the ladder.

The 2008 season belatedly produced the slump that many had predicted for the previous year with the Eagles ultimately missing the finals for the first time in a decade but they were back in the September fray a year later, ultimately finishing fourth. This was followed by a third place finish in 2010, and a third senior grade premiership the next year. Once again, this was achieved at the expense of Central District, the Eagles holding on at the end to win a thriller by 3 points, 12.9 (81) to 11.12 (78). In 2012 the Eagles slumped to 5th place on the ladder before recovering marginally in 2013 to finish 4th..

Mergers have become a sad but inevitable part of football life, but there have arguably been few as painless as that between the erstwhile West Torrens and Woodville Football Clubs. Commencing from a position of perceived equality (unlike, for example, the Brisbane and Fitzroy arrangement which, whatever the 'official' stance, and notwithstanding the attitudes of certain less enlightened and more desperate former Fitzroy supporters, was in effect a takeover) the two previously disparate organisation have welded, almost seamlessly, into one, achieving significantly more in just under two and a half decades - even allowing for the debacle of the 2005 grand final - than either Woodville or Torrens managed in the preceding 40 years. That said, there is sound reason to hope, perhaps even expect, that the years to come will prove to be even more productive, profitable and exciting, and that the legacy of Bills, Blight, Clingly, Hank, Head, Huppatz, Lindsay, Low, McKellar, Mills, Pontifex, Simunsen et al will endure for as long as the sport of Australian football is played.

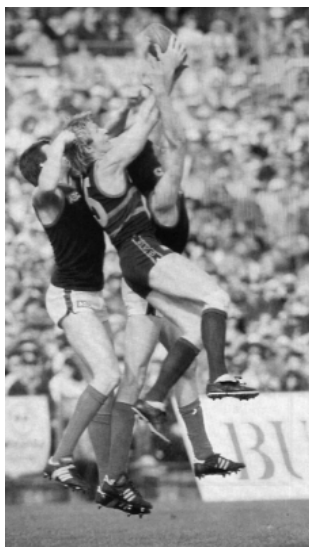
Eagles Soar High

1993 SANFL Grand Final: Woodville-West Torrens vs. Norwood

It would probably be fair to observe that diehard supporters of neither Woodville nor West Torrens were keen on the merger into which their clubs entered at the conclusion of the 1990 football season. the move coincided with the admission of a South Australian-based team, Adelaide, to the AFL, and was much more a marriage of convenience - indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, a survival measure - rather than the result of any genuine mutual admiration or respect. Nevertheless, in terms of results on the field of play, the merger proved a success from the outset, with the Woodville-West Torrens Eagles contesting the finals in each of their first four seasons. After finishing 4th in 1991, they rose one place on the premiership ladder the following year, before qualifying for their first grand final in commanding fashion in 1993. After comfortably claiming the minor premiership the Eagles conclusively accounted for reigning premier Port Adelaide in the 2nd semi final by a margin of of 74 points, 14.20 (104) to 4.6 (30).

The Eagles' opposition in the grand final would be provided by a Norwood side which had shown considerable improvement in the 1993 season after failing to qualify for the finals in both 1991 and 1992. The Redlegs reached the premiership decider by means of a hat-trick of finals victories over Central District by 21 points, Glenelg by 10 points, and Port Adelaide by 27 points. A crowd of 42,719, the largest SANFL attendance since the formation of the Adelaide Crows, turned up at Football Park in keen anticipation of a close, hard fought contest. When the 2 sides had met in round 7 at league headquarters the Eagles had overcome a 7 point three quarter time deficit to emerge victorious by 18 points, 16.16 (1120 to 14.10 (94). The sides' second encounter of the year had come in round 16 at Woodville, with the Eagles winning rather more comfortably on that occasion, 18.16 (124) to

11.11 (77), a margin of 47 points. Finally, in round 22 at Norwood, the 2 teams had played out a thriller, with the Redlegs nipping at the Eagles' heels all day only to fall short at the death by a couple of straight kicks. Final scores were Woodville-West Torrens 15.26 (116); Norwood 16.8 (104).



High flying action from the 1993 grand final: Andrew Taylor apparently "has the sit" despite the attentions of his two Norwood opponents.

First year Eagles coach Bruce Winter enjoyed the luxury of having all players fit and available for selection, and felt that the team which would be taking the field was the strongest that could have been chosen. His counterpart at Norwood, Neil Craig, originally appointed in 1991, also had a full squad of players from which to choose, although he admitted that one or two were probably at less than optimum fitness. Nevertheless, he believed that if the Redlegs could demonstrate the same level of competitiveness that had

characterised their play during the second half of the season they would be in with a real chance of procuring the club's 'first senior grade flag since 1984. When Norwood's team was announced more than half of the players were aged under twenty-one, making the Redlegs perhaps the SANFL's youngest ever grand finalists.

The match gets underway in fine if somewhat overcast conditions, with the Eagles kicking to the southern end of Football Park, which is marginally favoured by a moderate north easterly breeze.

1st Quarter

From the opening bounce, the Eagles forced the ball forward out of the centre, and on-baller Steven Sziller, held when not in possession when just outside 50 was awarded a free. Looking up, he spotted a fast-leading Andrew Taylor running out from the goal square and found him with a perfectly directed 40 metre pass. Full forward Taylor, cleverly taking into account the fact that a strong breeze was blowing across the southern goal from left to right, aimed his kick at the left behind post and saw it swing round and through the central uprights for the game's first major score.

Another goal to the Eagles follows shortly afterwards when their ruckman David Neimann is freed just inside 50 and then awarded a 50 metre penalty when the Redlegs fail to return the ball to him when asked to do so by the umpire. Neimann is thus left with the straightforward task of kicking for goal from point blank range, and not surprisingly makes no mistake.

Norwood do not manage to make a forward foray until five minutes in but it proves decisive as full forward Chris Prime goals after marking strongly midway between centre half forward and half forward right.

The ensuing twelve minutes or so are dominated by the Eagles who maintain possession coolly under pressure only to prove wayward when kicking for goal. Finally, however, at the seventeen minute mark of the quarter, centre half forward Sam Phillipou marks strongly some 40 metres

from goal and boots his side's 3rd six-pointer. The goal gives the Eagles a 14 point advantage, 3.3 (21) to 1.1 (7).

The contrast in styles between the two teams is quite marked, with the Eagles looking to go long at every opportunity, while the Redlegs are tending to be somewhat overelaborate when in possession. The Eagles' attack on ball and ball carrier is also noticeably more ferocious and effective than that of their opponents.

A sensational left foot snap from half forward flanker Matthew Kluzek deep in the left forward pocket stretches the Eagles' lead to 20 points after nineteen minutes, and shortly afterwards first Steven Sziller and then wingman Shane Breuer extend the lead still further with long raking shots for minor scores. Ruck-rover Wayne Weidemann and then Breuer again then add further behinds with Norwood looking all at sea, and completely unable to get the ball out of their defensive half.

A couple of minutes into time-on the Redlegs, despite coming under intense defensive pressure, finally manage to penetrate deep into their attacking zone and rover Stephen Patterson snaps truly over his shoulder from 30 metres out directly in front. The Eagles hold a 17 point advantage, 4.7 (31) to 2.2 (14).

The Eagles' response is swift and telling as, from the ensuing centre bounce, they surge into attack, and Andrew Taylor registers his second major of the match after marking strongly 25 metres from goal. Moments after the resumption the quarter time siren sounds. The Redlegs have been winning in the ruck but elsewhere they have been comprehensively outgunned. However, the Eagles' superiority has not been fully reflected on the scoreboard, and with Norwood set to enjoy the advantage of the breeze in the 2nd term the match is still very much alive.

**QUARTER TIME: Woodville-West Torrens 5.7 (37);
Norwood 2.2 (14)**

2nd Quarter

The Redlegs dominate the early stages of the 2nd term, but prove unable to confirm their superiority on the scoreboard. The Eagles, by contrast, are swift and incisive on the counter, and their first forward thrust of the quarter on 4 minutes culminates in Steven Sziller marking strongly just inside 50 and kicking truly to register his side's 6th major of the game. Two minutes later Sam Phillipou, having received a free for around the neck, kicks his 2nd goal of the game from an almost identical position to Sziller. Scores are Eagles 7.7 (49) to Norwood 2.3 (15).

The Eagles players are making light of the fact that they are kicking into a fairly strong breeze. Their play is penetrative and direct, and further goals to rover Jason Sziller and half back flanker Jamie Tape stretch their advantage to 47 points after 17 minutes of the quarter have elapsed.

The ensuing 5 minutes see the Eagles continuing to enjoy consummate dominance, with the Redlegs seeming out of their depth and, in some cases, visibly demoralised. Goals to half forward flanker Scott Morphett and Steven Sziller produce a scoreboard which shows the Eagles leading 11.9 (75) to 2.4 (16) at the 22 minute mark of the term.

During the time-on period the teams exchange goals, Steven Pitt rounding off a rare attacking foray for the Redlegs with a running shot from 30 metres out directly in front, before Steven Sziller restores the Eagles' 59 point advantage with a magnificent "long bomb" from 55 metres out.

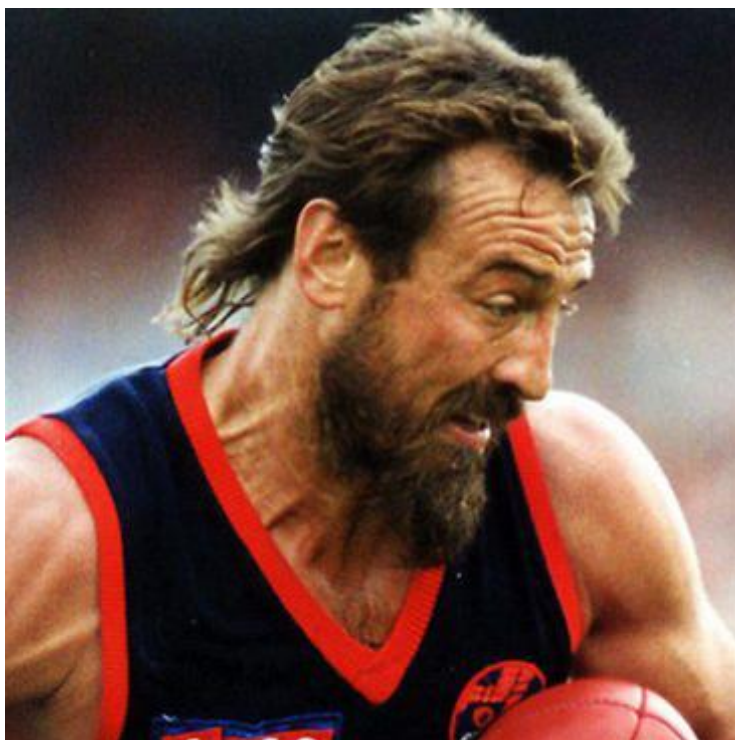
HALF TIME: Woodville-West Torrens 12.9 (81); Norwood 3.4 (22)

3rd Quarter

The opening minutes of the 3rd term see the Redlegs controlling the football, albeit in the face of frenetic pressure from their opponents. They make hard work of it, but finally some 4 minutes in they manufacture a clear scoring opportunity for Chris Prime, who dribbles the ball

through from a distance of 20 metres. It is just the start they needed, but can they capitalise?

A minute and a half later forward flanker Christian O'Brien misses an easy set shot from centre half forward letting the Eagles off the hook. The Eagles then proceed to dominate affairs only to squander a succession of comparatively easy goal scoring opportunities. At the 15 minute mark of the term they hold a 54 point lead, 12.12 (84) to Norwood's 4.6 (30).



Redleg champion Garry McIntosh.

With both teams applying stern defensive pressure scoring opportunities are at a premium. However, the Eagles are attacking more frequently than Norwood, and a minute into time-on they finally register their first goal of the quarter courtesy of Andrew Taylor. This stretches the Eagles' lead to 61 points, 13.13 (91) to 4.6 (30).

To their credit, the Redlegs do not drop their heads, and the next goal is theirs, off the boot of Christian O'Brien. However, this proves to be the last major score of the quarter.

Despite managing to contain the Eagles effectively for most of the quarter the Redlegs have failed to impose themselves on the game in an attacking sense, and at the final change the Eagles still hold a comprehensive scoreboard advantage.

THREE QUARTER TIME: Woodville-West Torrens 13.14 (92); Norwood 5.7 (37)

4th Quarter

Nick Pesch, who has been on the Eagles bench for most of the match, collects the ball on left centre wing and dashes goalwards, taking two bounces in the process. from just outside the 50 metre arc he spears a low pass to a fast-leading Stuart Nichol who marks safely at centre half forward before kicking truly. Three minutes into the final term the match now looks as good as over as the Eagles lead by 61 points, 14.14 (98) to 5.7 (37).

The Eagles continue to dominate, but they have to wait another 10 minutes before adding to their goal tally, this time off the boot of Jason Sziller who marks on his chest 30 metres out and never looks like missing. Three minutes later Matthew Kluzek registers the Eagles' 16th major of the match after being freed about 35 metres from goal directly in front.

The Eagles' 17th goal arrives moments later when Pesch kicks truly from centre half forward after intercepting a careless handball from a Redleg opponent. The margin is now 81 points, Eagles 17.16 (118) lead Norwood 5.7 (37).

After 19 minutes Norwood reduce the margin courtesy of Patterson, who is heavily felled in the act of kicking, and looks to be in some discomfort.

Four minutes later Jonathan Tumes kicks the first goal of his 30 game SANFL career to bring the Redlegs to within 70 points, but this proves to be the last major score of the match. The Eagles dominate possession for the final 7 minutes, adding 3 more behinds to their tally to run out convincing winners by 73 points.

FINAL SCORE: Woodville-West Torrens 17.20 (122); Norwood 7.7 (49)

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Points
Woodville-West Torrens	5.7	12.9	13.14	17.20	122
Norwood	2.2	3.4	5.7	7.7	49

BEST - Eagles: S.Sziller, Weidemann, Tape, Chapman, Breuer, Rogers, Prymke **Norwood:** Rowe, Robinson, Burns, Patterson, James

GOALS - Eagles: S.Sziller, Taylor 3; Kluzek, Phillipou, J.Sziller 2; Morphet, Nicol, Niemann, Pesch, Tape

Norwood: Patterson, Prime 2; O'Brien, Pitt, Tumes

ATTENDANCE: 42,719 at Football Park