

Glenelg's Golden Years

Since it was formed in 1921, Glenelg Football Club has fielded many fine sides, yet it has won only one premiership.

The "golden year" was 1934. The Tigers topped the ladder and their high-flying ruckman G. B. ("Blue") Johnston won the Magarey Medal.

But there are many astute supporters who still claim that the 1950 team which went down to Norwood in the grand final was the best Bay side of all time.

In that year the Tigers had all the enthusiasm, skill, height and team spirit of a premiership team. Throughout the year they played magnificent football.

The great Alan Crabb was a tower of strength in ruck. Full-back Ray Hunt was a constant nightmare for opposing forwards, and Colin Churchett was proving himself best post-war goal-getter. Johnny Taylor and his two brothers, Don and Laurie, gave a terrific impetus to the overall skill of the team. A leg injury late in the season to Laurie took some of the sting from the forward play, and his failure to line up for the grand final was a real body blow.

Long before the minor round was completed it was evident that the Tiger would make the grand final. The only danger was the Redleg, but in the last game of the minor round Glenelg brushed Norwood aside . . . on Norwood Oval! Again Crabb was the master of Norwood's John Marriott.

The Norwood Oval game was vital to Glenelg as victory gave them the double chance. They won because the spirit was there, the spirit needed so badly today for a revival.

Glenelg went into the second semi-final against Norwood. It was one of the most thrilling major round tussles in many years, with Norwood struggling to a 5-point, heart-failure win. The Tigers then made short work of Port, and it was a worried Norwood side that ran on to Adelaide Oval for the premiership battle with Glenelg.

How would they stop Ray Hunt, Colin Churchett and Alan Crabb?

Hunt was in uncanny form, shattering every team's attempts at methodical attack. They had found it almost impossible to beat him. But Norwood had burnt the midnight oil forming a desperate plan. They decided to sacrifice star player Neville Way. Neville's job was to lure the brilliant Hunt, under the ball whenever Norwood began to attack.

If the Bays had a weakness in the 1950 side it was across centre. Norwood had the power points here. And it was on this line that the outcome of the Way-Hunt duel depended.

Norwood had to gain possession often enough to get the ball deep over Hunt's head. Their forward pocket men then had to race in to take over. The strategy paid off. Norwood's pockets were able to score often enough to win.

But perhaps it was bad luck, rather than these tactics, which cost Glenelg its second premiership. Colin Churchett, who booted 105 goals in that season—a feat unlikely to be equalled for many years—suffered an injury early in the game. This made the task of his opponent Ron Reimann much easier, and Colin was able to kick only 1.3.

It was significant in this big game that the result rested on the full-forward and full-back positions. Norwood's plan with Neville Way succeeded in part—Hunt, champion that he was, still had more than his share of the play.

A lesson to be learnt from that final is that the outstanding individualist is not the type of player to take his team top.

Neville Way sacrificed himself and his natural game for the benefit of his team. This is the type of player who counts most in team structure. And remember that nine times out of 10 the best TEAM wins.