

GLENELG

"Baby" Club with Plenty of Fight!

Two seasons stand out in Glenelg's 30 years in League football—1934, when they won their first and only premiership, and 1950, when they were runners-up.

Admitted to the League in 1921, they were the "babies" of the competition—and they have not had an easy road.

It has been a hard fight over the years—the difficulties of the early years, boundary problems, limited local talent, injuries to key men—all factors that unsettle and unbalance a team. Their popular name "the tigers," because of the yellow-and-black uniforms, is not wrongly placed. They have fought tenaciously and vigorously over the years.

The club was formed at a meeting called for the purpose in the Glenelg Town Hall on March 10, 1920. Mr. H. G. McKittrick was the first chairman, and Mr. R. B. Joliffe was appointed secretary. He was forced to resign almost immediately because of his transfer from the district. One of Glenelg Club's greatest workers, Mr. E. A. Rugless, took over the position. After a season in the Association competition, Glenelg were admitted to the League. Their application for admission was put before the senior body by a deputation comprising Messrs. Rugless, Frank Smith and Roy Kappler (first treasurer). Everyone in Glenelg today can recall the wonderful work Mr. E. A. Rugless did as secretary. He held the position until 1936, when pressure of business caused him to resign. He was made a life member as an indication of the Club's appreciation of his work.

Mr. W. Milhinch took over and continued until 1948, when the present assistant secretary of the S.A.N.F.L., Mr. Harry Clamp, came into office. On his appointment to the League office, the present secretary, Mr. Ray Curnow, became secretary.

If ever a team started from scratch, Glenelg did. They had few players with previous League experience in their first teams. Jack Hanley came from West, W. Thomas and C. L. Stopford transferred from South, W. Murdoch came from Torrens, while R. G. and J. Kappler left Sturt to join the Bays. It became necessary to undertake a vigorous team-building policy from the outset—and this policy has produced some very fine players from the Glenelg area.

The Tigers played their first League game against West at Adelaide Oval on May 7, 1921. The team that took the field was as follows: J. Handley (captain), W. Thomas (vice-captain), H. Farrelly, F. Gates, F. Grealy, V. Hillier, L. Hawkes, H. Hine, E. Haddrick, S. James, J. Kappler, W. Murdoch, G. Oliver, P. G. Perry, W. Rice, E. H. Searle, R. Thomson and T. Taylor.

One might wonder just how widely scattered those 18 are today. Of that team the only players with previous League experience were Hanley, Thomas, Murdoch and Kappler. Hanley was appointed coach of the side, and he well deserved the appointment. He began his football career at Christian Brothers College, where he was coached by A. C. Norden, one of Victoria's best umpires, who was in Adelaide at the time. On leaving college, Hanley played for South B, but after one season he was promoted to the senior eighteen. After two years with South he shifted to West, and there in his five years with that club played his best football. He was living at Glenelg when the Bays first came into existence, and he threw in his lot with the young side. He led them for three years, until a serious operation in 1924 compelled him to retire as a player.

Glenelg did not win a game in their first season, but they showed a steady improvement in their play for the first three years. Dick Head, former West and State centreman, followed Hanley as the coach of the side. Considering their initial team-building difficulties, it was not surprising that Glenelg were beaten

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in their first 56 matches. Then they provided a football sensation. “Stump” Pincombe, who had made his name in Broken Hill as an astute tactician in football and cricket, was appointed coach for the 1925 season.

The Tigers had to face Torrens, who had won the premiership in the previous season, at Glenelg in the first game of the 1925 series. Confounding the critics, and delighting local supporters, Glenelg thrashed the blue-and-golds. Pincombe was the idol of Glenelg. It was a different story following the next game. Sturt trounced the Tigers—and the coach was relieved of his position after the match.

These early years were difficult years. It was mainly a case of team-building. Some country men were brought in—Percy Parry, a rugged half-back; L. Mutton, who later became a star with Norwood; Ivan Moore, a fine half-back; and G. Oliver, were some of them. The year 1924 was an important one in club activities. That was the year when the Tigers made one of their greatest finds. Jack Owens came from Broken Hill to join the side, and he was one of the leading full-forwards in the State until 1935. He scored 826 goals for Glenelg, figured in interstate and carnival matches on many occasions. Cyril Hoft came from Perth to help the Bay side. He was another to win his way into a State team. Jim Handby (later Mayor of Glenelg and also a Member of the House of Representatives) played with South until 1924. He went in the carnival side to Hobart that season, then transferred to Glenelg. He was an outstanding player for several seasons.

Broken Hill gave the side another great little player in Jack Lloyd. He transferred from Port to star at centre wing for Glenelg. Gordon Barbary was another good wingman to make his mark, while Exley came from West Australia to help in 1925. Hoft was the captain at that time.

Next year Jim Handby was made captain and coach—and the team won four games. In that season Glenelg rose above bottom place on the premiership table for the first time. They remained in seventh place then until 1931, when they moved up above South and West. An outstanding player in Len Sallis came into prominence in 1926 as a half-back. Later he developed into one of the finest centre-men in the State. He played for Glenelg from 1924 until the end of 1935—and won many fine trophies, including five years as the Club’s fairest and most brilliant. Harold Jackson, who later became secretary of South, was in the side in 1925, when Jack Sexton, a grand player, also made his start. Clem Hill also started that year, and he went on until the end of the 1934 series. That dynamic personality, G. B. (“Blue”) Johnston, took the stage in 1927, and developed into one of the most sensational highfliers ever seen in Adelaide. A knee injury threatened to put him out of action at the end of 1934, but he came back solidly, regained form, and gave great service for subsequent seasons.

Roy Brown became captain and coach in 1929. He was a former Torrens and State captain, but even his drive did not lift the side above seventh place. A top-notch rover in Arthur Link played his first games that season. It was not much of a story for the next few years. The Tigers battled on bravely until, by the start of 1934, they had an impressive side. Their football ability, courage and determination saw them in second position to Port at the end of the minor round of that year. Coaching the side was Bruce McGregor, former West, South and State captain.

Port trounced Glenelg in the second semi-final, and premiership prospects were not bright. Even the most ardent supporters gave them little chance of beating Sturt in the final. Glenelg won. But they were not given much chance of beating Port in the grand final. The story of that grand final is a milestone in the Club’s history. It was a magnificent performance. “Blue” Johnston played a big part in the premiership win, and it was fitting that he should be presented with the Magarey Medal as the fairest and most brilliant player of the season.

Glenelg had 17 new men on their training list at the beginning of the 1935 season, and they were badly beaten by North in the opening match of the series.

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Then they made history by going from top to bottom in consecutive years. Glenelg were in the doldrums in the years following their premiership win. They were faced with a rebuilding task as they fought to get away from the bottom of the table. Then lean years, however, had their compensations, because they slowly but surely helped Glenelg to regain a standard.

Ray Hunt and Ron Goodwin, an above-average half-forward, were recruited in 1936, and remained to give the side fine service. Only four games were won in 1936, and Glenelg could not improve on this tally in the following year. Ron Keane, from West Adelaide, and Ted Robjent were two later stars to join Glenelg in 1938, but only two teams were beaten, Sturt twice and Port once. Frank Burt came from Broken Hill to join the side in 1939, and it was in this season that Gordon Abbott was recruited from Geelong and Marcus Boyall transferred from Collingwood.

A South Australian League delegation made appeals for clearances for Boyall and Abbott, at the request of the Glenelg Corporation. The trip was successful so far as Abbott was concerned, but Boyall was delayed from making his South Australian debut until 1940. Abbott gave the side a lift, gaining inclusion in the State side soon after being eligible to play for Glenelg. Still, Glenelg won only two games in that year. Three wins came their way in 1940, but they began to rise again in 1941, when they finished sixth with five wins to their credit.

When the war-time group team competition was instituted in 1942, Glenelg were linked with West Adelaide. It was in this period that they became associated with three men who were to play a big part in Glenelg regaining a place in the sun. They were Johnny, Laurie, and Don Taylor, who were then West players. Alan Crabb and Colin Churchett made their first appearances in this period, while still schoolboys, and waiting to be old enough to go on service. Both returned to star in the post-war period.

West-Glenelg were runners-up to Port-Torrens in the first year of the group team competition, but finished third and fourth in the two following years. When normal League football was resumed after the war, Glenelg struck another lean patch. They were seventh in 1945, eighth in 1946, and seventh in 1947.

First suggestion of their return to power came in 1948, when they finished sixth on the premiership list. They went one better in the following season, and then came 1950 with the tremendous lift given the side by the acquisition of Johnny Taylor as playing-coach. He was followed from West Adelaide by his two brothers, Don and Laurie, and the trio played a big part in carrying Glenelg into the finals for only the second time in their history.

The 1950's were not a successful period, but several experiments were tried both by League and Club. In 1951 the first country game was played with premiership points at stake. Glenelg defeated Norwood at Moonta 9.21 to 10.7. Colin Churchett also kicked his 102 goals and was a mainstay in Glenelg finishing third.

Glenelg's "iron man" Johnny Taylor (captain-coach) decided to retire in 1952 after a wonderful career of highest number of games by an individual in South Australia—258 games.

Pat Hall, from Norwood, followed as coach, and in his first year Glenelg finished third. Then, in 1955, the experiment of a full-time coach, another first by the Tigers, was the appointment of Charles ("Chooka") May. His term was for five years, and the Club is very happy to report that his association is still a very active one in coaching schoolboys in the District.

Neil Davies was appointed coach in 1958, and immediate success was not forthcoming, but the next year Glenelg were well in the fight and finished a creditable third.

The start of the 1960's did not see any signs of a premiership. This year, under new coach, Doug Long, from Geelong, Victoria, the enthusiasm and will-to-win should be re-kindled to give the Tigers a new life and a big lift on the premiership table.