



# GRAND FINAL 1975



By Alan Shiell

**DONALD** Neil Kerley, 41, football legend, was at his affable best as we talked in his city office at Stillwell Ford, where he is assistant sales manager.

It couldn't have been easy for him to relax almost on the eve of the grand final.

The phone rang repeatedly, for car and football business.

His close friend and confidant, Graham Ferrett, called in to discuss some ideas, and Kerl told us some Irish jokes.

One of his occasional golfing partners, Bill Rymill, who barracks for Norwood, came and went with a sincere "Ow yer goin', good luck, boy," message.

And a Whyalla fellow, who was buying a car, interrupted briefly with those immortal words: "Don't remember me, do you?"

## Rejected

Throughout a rather hectic 90 minutes, the man they call "The King" was all smiles and thoroughly personable.

It was a far cry from the rough, tough, gruff image so many South Australian football followers have of Kerley.

He is, of course, aware that he



has been called many names, good and bad. "Yes," he said, "some call me a professional, others call me a dill. "Some reckon I'm a money-hungry mercenary. "I think that snow-balled through the media years ago. "I've never added fuel to it. What people want to say about me is entirely up to them. "Sure, money is important. But it's not everything.

"I proved that late last year when I rejected the big West Adelaide offer.

"As an individual, I would like to think I haven't changed over the years.

"But as a football coach, I think I've changed a lot.

"I've learnt to appreciate that people think differently now to, say, 20 years ago.

"People who are not prepared to change and go along to a degree with today's way of life are only running into a brick wall.

"You know the main problem with people today, don't you?

"They're lazy and becoming lazier.

"The modern way of living can affect footballers. "At Richmond in 1961, we had a lot of players who worked hard manually.

## Balanced

"For instance, I was driving a truck before then.

"Players were naturally hard and tough. Now they don't want to do that sort of work.

"So they have to pay more attention to physical build-up and body conditioning."

Kerley said his football theme had always revolved around the word "commitment."

"A total commitment," he stressed. "I have always demanded 100 per cent. effort.

"When a player pulls on a

jumper, he accepts the responsibility for all those people who work so hard for his club.

"He should be conscious only of not letting those people down.

"If players, officials, and committeemen are not prepared to give 100 per cent., they are not required in my book.

"I'd like to think I have had that sort of co-operation wherever I've been.

"I've had it even more so at Glenelg. Our record in recent years proves that.

"I have seen skilful players fall because they haven't been prepared to work and give 100 per cent. to the game.

"But all Glenelg players give their utmost. They work bloody hard.

"Glenelg is the best club I have been associated with."

And after 14 years as a league coach, he rates the Glenelg team to play Norwood tomorrow as the best side he has ever controlled.

"More mature and experienced, better balanced, and a shade more skilful than the side which won us the 1973 premiership" . . . that's Kerley's description of the 20 players who will run out on Football Park tomorrow.

"It has so much talent, I believe it would defeat comfortably the West Adelaide premiership side of 1961 and the South Adelaide premiership side of 1964," he went on.

"That might seem disrespectful to the players I had then.

# 'THE KING' TALKS ABOUT HIS BEST TEAM

"I don't mean it that way, but the game has changed so much in the past 10-15 years.

"It's faster, more competitive, and the players are fitter.

"This year, Glenelg players have developed an even better understanding than they had in 1973.

"They are a very close unit this season.

"Their team spirit, dedication, and loyalty to each other is tremendous.

"While I say this is the best team I have coached, I guess it hasn't proved itself until it wins the premiership.

"In football, there is only one day in the year that counts — grand final day.

"If you lose, you have wasted a whole year."

Why will Glenelg win tomorrow? "We are now playing our best football for the year.

"We started well, had a lapse, and now the players are playing as well as I've seen them.

"Yes, Norwood are a good side. You have to be to play in a grand final.

## Sentiment

"But grand finals are a different type of game to any other match.

"I think our experience will stand us in good stead."

I asked Kerley if he felt any sentiment or sympathy for Norwood because they hadn't won a premiership for 25 years.

He replied swiftly, shaking his head: "I'm afraid I'm a bit short on sentiment when it comes to football."

Kerley gets away from football by golfing, fishing, duck shooting, relaxing at his shack at Walker's Flat on the River Murray, or lounging by the pool of his sumptuous home at Bellevue Heights.

"I enjoy life," he said. "I like doing things.

"And football has been my life—it's something I love.

If, or when, he decided his coaching days were over, would he become involved in the administrative side of football?

"I don't think so," he said. "I haven't got a lot of patience.

"Besides, I like to make my own decisions."

## THE GIRLS ALSO ARE PART OF THE TEAM

**NEIL KERLEY** doesn't forget the part wives and girlfriends play in the build-up of a premiership team.

"Down at Glenelg," he says, "we have various shows and functions at which the players and their wives and girlfriends all mix socially.

"It's important to involve the women.

"It can influence their thoughts towards the game and the way they talk to their men about football and the club.

"Players can be affected by their wives being dissatisfied with or jealous of football.

"They are tied up with football for

about nine months of the year and they have to make a lot of sacrifices."

Kerley pays a sincere tribute to the support he has received from his wife, Barbara, describing her as "tremendous."

And he added warmly: "The understanding Barb has shown me and the sacrifices she has made have been an enormous help to me.

"Let's face it. I don't think any football coach is the easiest person to live with, particularly around finals time."

The Kerleys have three children — Donald, 17, Robyn, 14, and Gail, six.



Keeping trim at gym while their Tiger men are doing the same at Glenelg Oval are (from left), Greg Wickens' girlfriend, Vicki Sharp, Mrs. Athena Bennett, Mrs. Terry Phillis, Neil Kerley's daughter, Robyn, and his wife, Barbara.

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