

Glenelg gallops away from stern Sturt

Mike Coward reports

Glenelg took a significant step towards its sixth grand final in eight years when it outclassed Sturt by 23 points in a gruelling and enthralling qualifying final at Football Park yesterday.

A wildly excited crowd of 22,784 saw one of the toughest, tightest and most intense conflicts between the regular September rivals of the past few years.

The lead changed seven times during the match — four times in an absorbing third term — and on two occasions the sides were deadlocked.

Glenelg coach Neil Kerley, 42, does not believe he has seen a Sturt side play as hard since he started football in 1952.

"Sturt's attack on the body of the player in possession was very hard, in fact the hardest I can remember," Kerley said.

"And it's hard to imagine Sturt playing any better. That makes our performance all the more commendable."

Sturt showed magnificent fighting qualities.

With a recast side — Mike Delahunty started on a half-back flank, Brendon Howard at centre, Robbert Klomp at centre half-forward, Noel Pettingill on a wing, Michael Graham at half-forward and Malcolm Greenslade at full forward — and with key personnel badly out of touch, it fought relentlessly and not until the dying stages permitted Glenelg to wrest the initiative for good.

Ten minutes into the last quarter, and kicking into the now familiar West Lakes gale, Sturt was 27 points in arrears and apparently shattered.

But within moments, with run and method, it had reduced its deficit to eight points.

Had Klomp not missed from 35 metres on the run and Robert Barton, who played a fine last quarter, not kicked into the man when attempting to go short to the flank, Sturt could have regained the lead. That is problematical.

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| GLENELG | 2.5 | 9.7 | 13.12 | 20.16 | (136) |
| STURT | 5.3 | 6.9 | 11.12 | 16.17 | (113) |

But throughout the contest, Glenelg always had a little more evenness, composure and more consistent contributors.

And more importantly, it had ascendancy where it most counted.

Peter Marker controlled the centre, eclipsing both Howard and Klomp, while Peter Carey at last played like "Super Cat" — his nickname — and not like a meek kitten from some lost litter.

He repeatedly outrucked Rick Davies — particularly within the square — but his fitness prevented him from being as effective around the ground as his arch adversary.

Predictably enough, Kerley started Carey on the ball with Wayne Phillis, who later was used sparingly as a follower — and for a few mind-boggling moments as a half-forward flanker — at centre half-forward.

And often in partnership with Carey was Graham Cornes, who seems to be stimulated by grand occasions.

Cornes was in fine fettle, both on the ground and in the air. His solo performance in the second term, when in five minutes he took three telling marks for three vital goals, was the offering of a true champion.

Sturt did not have one player who was able consistently to stamp his authority on the match.

This, coupled with an alarming lack of run, rebound and penetration from defence, cost it dearly in the end.

Mike Nunan, who seems a most unpopular figure in the eyes of most Glenelg players, and indefatigable

GOALKICKERS — Glenelg — Cornes, 4.2; D. Phillis, 3.2; Caldwell, 3.1; Rebbeck, 2.3; W. Phillis, 2.2; C. Anderson, Marker, 2.0; Hodgeman, 1.2; McInerney, 1.0; MacFarlane, Carey, Rady, 0.1; rushed, 0.1. Sturt — Greenslade, 5.2; Nunan, 2.3; Barton, 2.0; Klomp, 1.3; Pettingill, Graham, 1.2; Bagshaw, Davies, Burgan, Lauder, 1.0; Lloyd, Wild, 0.1; rushed, 0.3.

BEST — Glenelg — Marker, Cornes, Carey, Lihou, McInerney, Voigt. Sturt — Nunan, Lloyd, Sims, Davies, Pettingill, Winter. Umpire — P. Mead.

Tony Lloyd tried gallantly and repeatedly to boost Sturt's stocks, but not enough help came often enough.

And Sturt too often found it nearly impossible to reach Greenslade at full forward.

Unflappable Jim Lihou, steady Paul Weston and stunningly adaptable Daryl Rady held sway across half-back, which forced the Sturt centreline and ball-following players to kick over the half-back line.

This forced many errors, particularly from enigmatic Noel Pettingill, who had a lot of touches but was not able to capitalise on all of them. However, he was positive and persistent and, strangely, created more opportunities with his hands than with his feet.

The match was played at a tremendous tempo, and there were some very heavy bumps traded.

And the encounter was not without incident. Rex Voigt and Barton, who staged their own private war in the third quarter, saw to that.

Sturt, quite rightly, will start favorite for Saturday's first semi-final against Norwood, but it would be foolish if, during the week, it did not take a long, searching look at its leg power — or, more significantly, its lack of it.

Injuries not so serious

Glenelg half-back Steve Hywood and Sturt half-forward Michael Graham are not as badly injured as was initially feared.

But club medical officers were reluctant to say whether or not they would be available this week.

Both were injured in yesterday's demanding qualifying final at Football Park.

Hywood had to be replaced after only five minutes and Graham left the ground during the last quarter.

Hywood has a hamstring worry. However, it is not considered serious and his movement has not been seriously affected.

Graham suffered a blow just above the knee late in the second quarter.

It looks as though he had been seriously hurt.

Trainers carried him from the ground at half-time but, after treatment, he returned.

He had little influence on the game, however, and was eventually replaced by Geoff Lauder.

The full extent of the injuries will not be determined until later today.

Graham Cornes, who played a fine game, received a nasty knock on the point of the shoulder but trainers were not unduly concerned.

Phil Nelson and Robert Barton, who have been worried by recent injuries, escaped unscathed.

And to the relief of Glenelg officials, John MacFarlane completed the match. Although terribly sore, he suffered no recurrence of his foot problem.