

Fuller's men live to fight another day

WARREN PARTLAND

WOODVILLE-West Torrens is alive. But make no mistake, it has needed a respirator to survive.

At times in yesterday's first semi-final the Eagles appeared in total command, looking every bit the reigning premiers and deserving of respect.

At other times, however, they appeared extremely fragile against a Glenelg side coach Mark Mickan rightfully labelled as courageous.

It has been that sort of season for the Eagles. Plagued by injuries and inconsistent form, they endured an indifferent minor round. But this team has tremendous qualities and a fighting spirit and that was again evident yesterday when challenged by Glenelg, game and honest to the end.

Eagles coach Ron Fuller admitted to being frustrated with the constantly swinging fortunes of his side, a concern for much of the season.

"It is very frustrating again that we had the opportunity to nail goals and put them away and didn't," Fuller said. "Some of our decision-making disposals were once again (disappointing). I know we are in finals and the pressure of finals is one thing.

"It has been the same story for much of the year but something we have to do - we have to put some real value on finishing off our work, first with disposal and finishing off in front of goal."

If there has been one constant to Glenelg's game it has been tardy opening quarters and again the Tigers put themselves under early pressure by allowing the Eagles to take the ascendancy. The Tigers suffered an early setback when skipper Ben Mules was carried off on a stretcher after a heavy clash with Dale Symmons in an incident which sparked a melee.

He returned to action in the second term in another indication of the tremendous character shown by Glenelg, which was forced to respond to a 1-6 win-loss start to the year to qualify for the finals.

The Eagles' attack on the contest worried the Tigers, whose 26 kicks compared to 43 handballs was evidence of the heat they were feeling.

Luke Powell, Luke Jarrad, Leigh Treeby and defender Mark McKenzie had a huge influence as the Eagles punished the Tigers for any mistake.

This Glenelg side has resolve, however. Just as opening quarters have been a problem, it also has shown strong will to respond and lift to a new level after quarter-time.

With the Tigers' intensity rising, the Eagles became unsure and lost their composure. Mickan has enforced the message of discipline and he was furious with Daniel Kirk, who conceded a free kick and subsequent goal to Jarrad after the half-time siren to put the Eagles back in front.

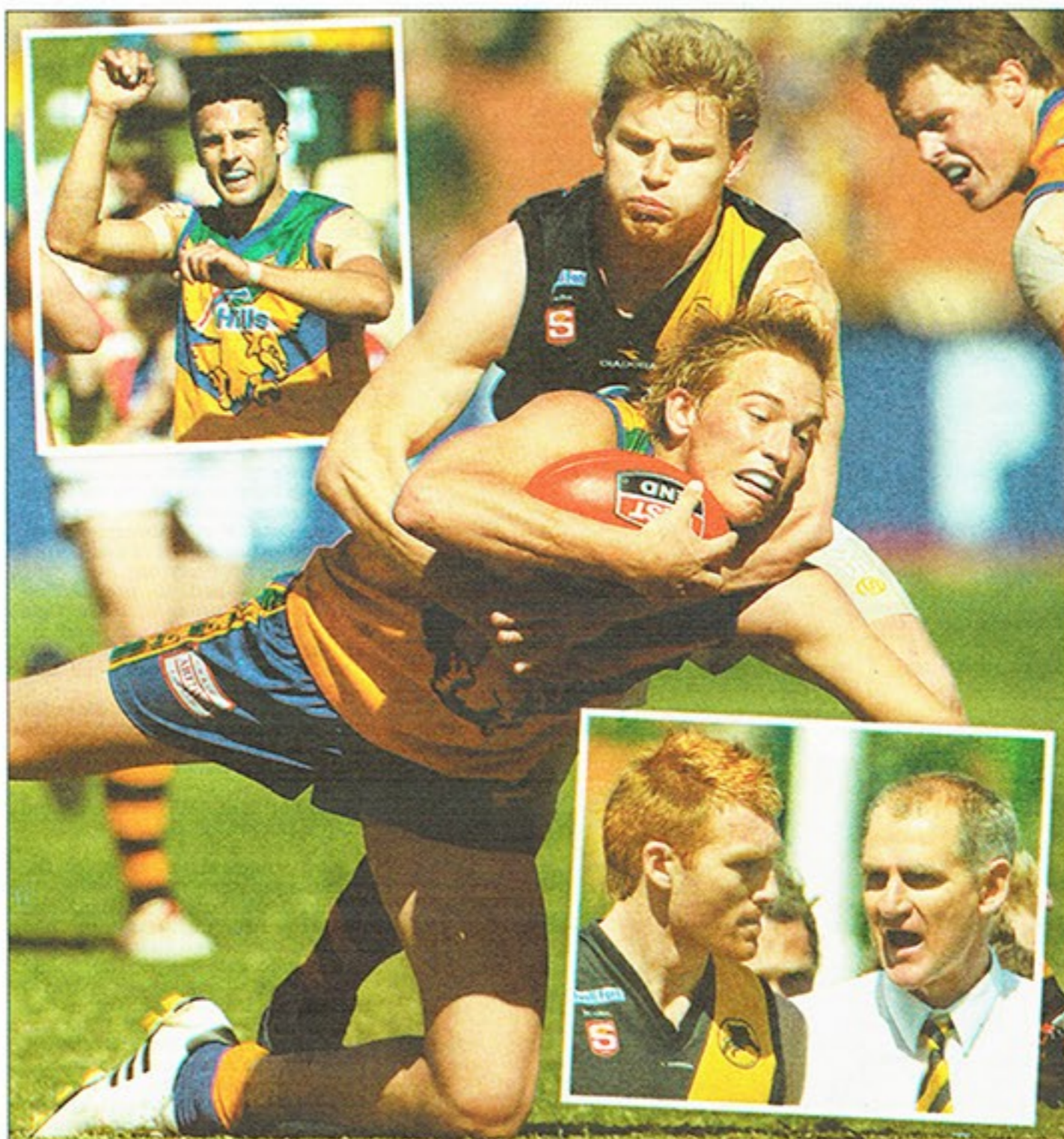
The normally unflappable Mickan raced onto the ground to make sure Kirk knew exactly how he felt.

"Discipline is the biggest thing we insist on and we need to maintain our standards," Mickan said. "But I give credit to our blokes' courage and ability to persist.

"That first quarter was enormously costly but the ability to fight is fantastic."

Amid the pressure of a cut-throat battle after half-time, both sides were guilty of rushed errors while Glenelg wasted opportunities in front of goal.

After building a 25-point buffer late in the third term, the Eagles were forced to withstand another gallant fightback from Glenelg. Ben Schwarze proved the hero when he nailed a goal in the dying minutes to put the Eagles six points clear.



BIG MOMENTS: Glenelg's Adam Fisher pressures Eagle Bernie Vince, Bays coach Mark Mickan gives Daniel Kirk a blast after he gave a goal away on half-time and Ben Schwarze celebrates kicking the winning goal. Pictures: RAY TITUS

Tassie ruled out of SANFL

MICHELANGELO RUCCI

TASMANIA will not join the SANFL to re-establish the SA league's numbers to 10 teams.

AFL Tasmania will keep its "Tasmanian Devils" in the new-look VFL. "We will sign a (VFL) licence for five years," AFL Tasmania chairman Dominic Baker said.

Tasmania's decision not to join the SANFL - it could have brought an end to the unpopular weekly bye required in a nine-team draw - leaves the SA Football Commission to renew negotiations with the Darwin-based AFL-Northern Territory.

But this league also is looking at options away from the SANFL, in this case the WA Football League in Perth.

Tasmania's interest in the SANFL dramatically waned after a new deal was struck with the VFL.

The Devils negotiated an increase in their salary cap - from \$200,000 to \$300,000 - and to have the team's travel and accommodation expenses for matches in Victoria paid by the AFL or AFL-Victoria.

Also, AFL Tasmania's bill for a VFL licence - \$85,000 this year - would be no more than \$30,000 next year.

And the AFL will pay \$250,000 as a grant to develop a centre of excellence for Tasmanian football's best teenagers.

SANFL chief executive Leigh Whicker congratulated AFL-Tasmania on its solid deal to remain in the VFL.

"I reckon what Tassie has done is fantastic," Whicker said. "At the end, this is not about SA, Tasmania and Victoria, it is about the game of Australian football and strengthening the code in a traditional state such as Tasmania."

Whicker said the SA Football Commission did not feel the Tasmanian proposal to join the SANFL had been used as a lever to strike a sweeter deal with the VFL.



87 v 81



WOODVILLE-WEST TORRENS
GLENELG

4.4 6.8 10.9 13.9
1.0 6.3 7.8 12.9

BEST

McKenzie, Powell, Jarrad, Treeby, Symmons, Fiacchi.

SCORERS

Treeby 4.0, Schwarze 2.3, Symmons 2.0, Jarrad, Geddes, McGregor, Stewart, McKenzie 1.0, Powell 0.2, Cooper, Lomas 0.1, rushed 0.2.

BEST

Fisher, Backwell, Kane, Douglas, Moore, Holmes.

SCORERS

Smith 3.0, Douglas 2.3, Backwell 2.1, Mahoney 2.0, McConnell 1.2, Fisher, Murphy 1.0, Kane 0.1, rushed 0.2.

INJURIES

Rudolph (knee), Backwell (ankle), McConnell (hamstring), Mules (concussion).

UMPIRES - S. Hay, R. Williams, D. Joyce. **CROWD** - 14,764 at Adelaide Oval.

	Kicks	Mks	Hbl	F/for	F/og	Gls	Pts	H/O	Tkl
COOPER	11	2	4	1	1	0	1	0	2
SCHWARZE	9	6	3	0	4	2	3	0	0
SALTER	5	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
FAIRCLOUGH	11	1	7	0	1	0	0	0	1
MCGREGOR	5	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
CICOLELLA	7	2	5	1	2	0	0	1	4
JARRAD	17	9	6	2	0	1	0	0	0
POWELL	10	2	5	1	0	0	2	0	6
TREEBY	9	3	4	2	0	4	0	0	1
REDDEN	4	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	1
PEDLER	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	1
P. FIACCHI	11	7	6	2	3	0	0	0	2
MCKENZIE	12	5	9	2	0	1	0	0	4
HIER	8	4	5	3	0	0	0	0	3
STEWART	7	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
LINDSAY	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	22	2
VINCE	13	4	6	1	0	0	0	0	1
LOMAS	14	0	3	5	2	0	1	0	2
DABROWSKI	4	4	4	0	1	0	0	3	1
SYMMONS	7	2	2	3	1	2	0	0	0
GEDDES	8	4	8	0	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	174	68	96	25	19	13	9	26	34

	Kicks	Mks	Hbl	F/for	F/og	Gls	Pts	H/O	Tkl
HOLMES	7	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	2
MCCONNELL	6	4	2	0	0	1	2	1	0
RUWOLDT	7	0	5	2	1	0	0	0	1
DOUGLAS	13	3	4	2	2	2	3	0	1
KIRKBY	1	3	3	0	1	0	0	0	1
RUDOLPH	9	3	4	2	0	0	0	0	1
MAHONEY	5	4	4	0	0	2	0	0	2
MURPHY	3	1	7	0	1	1	0	0	3
MOORE	11	2	4	3	1	0	0	0	1
MULES	6	3	7	0	1	0	0	0	2
SHERWOOD	7	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	1
KANE	14	4	8	1	1	0	1	0	1
SUGARS	5	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
SMITH	10	5	2	0	1	3	0	0	1
HINGE	3	2	11	1	1	0	0	1	2
KIRK	7	5	3	0	1	0	0	3	1
FISHER	14	4	3	2	5	1	0	1	7
BACKWELL	12	2	14	1	2	2	1	0	0
ALLEN	8	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	0
CRANSTON	2	0	7	1	1	0	0	10	3
PANOZZO	3	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	153	53	106	19	25	12	9	18	30

Mickan looks for better start

GLENELG coach Mark Mickan will tinker with the Tigers' pre-season for 2008 in a bid to ensure there is no repeat of the slow start to this season.

The Tigers put themselves under the pump with a 1-6 win-loss start to the season but they responded to the challenge to earn their first finals berth since 1999. They tasted their first major-round success since 1992 with an elimination final win over Sturt before a brave six-point loss to Woodville-West Torrens at Adelaide Oval yesterday.

"I have a lot of planning to do to make sure we are in better shape to start the year," Mickan said. "That is a priority for next year.

"We have to do everything better and we have certainly got to start the year better. We might have to adjust our pre-season.

"It is encouraging that we have known for a while that we can now mix it with the best. It is rare that a group comes from 1-6 to turn the season around like they did. That is full credit to the resolve and character of the players," Mickan said recruiting would be a key part of the planning process, with the squad to be reassessed.

Eagles coach Ron Fuller praised Glenelg as a "good, quality" opponent. "I've said for a few months that they are going to have impact on the finals," Fuller said.