

Grand Doggies just keep on digging in

Move proves a spur for Lee

Back from the brink - again

WARREN PARTLAND

THE first question asked when the siren sounded to end the second semi-final at AAMI Stadium yesterday was so appropriate. How do the Bulldogs do it?

Confronting a 20-point deficit at three-quarter-time against a Glenelg side seemingly with the answers, Central District again exposed its finals fighting spirit and incredible will to win. In fact, the mountain facing the Bulldogs was 26 points before best-on-ground Lee Spurr nailed the final goal of the third term deep into time-on.

The Bulldogs, seven times premiers in the past nine years, will contest their 10th successive grand final after conquering Glenelg by two points in the second semi-final at AAMI Stadium yesterday. In that 10-year span, the Bulldogs have yet to contest the preliminary final.

Glenelg, the minor premier, must now negotiate Sturt in the season's penultimate match to earn a grand final rematch with the SANFL's modern-day power.

It is the second successive week the Bulldogs have pulled off a miraculous win, having come from behind to beat the Double Blues in the qualifying final. Forget talk of get-out-of-jail cards, this club just knows how to win.

"These blokes have proved themselves in that area - they will hang in there," Bulldogs coach Roy Laird said. "They dig in when it is hard."

"There is a lot of character. You go back to the day when this started to turn around (for the club). Characters were brought into the footy club and good ones at that."

The Bulldogs nailed the opening two goals within a minute to make an early statement on the contest.

But rather than be rattled, the Tigers bagged the next five goals to lead by 16 points early in the second quarter on the back of solid work from Byron Murphy and Ty Allen.

This Bulldogs' effort resembled the Rocky movie. It kept taking body blows, a couple of eight counts and still kept climbing off the ropes. The Dogs, not helped by an 8-18 free kick count against them in the first half, momentarily grabbed the lead before half-time only to concede two goals to the Tigers.

When Mark Ruwoldt nailed



BULLDOGS v TIGERS					
Second semi-final, AAMI Stadium Crowd 14,207					
Central	2.3	5.7	7.7	12.9	81
Glenelg	2.1	7.4	10.9	11.13	79

BEST: Central: Spurr, Sansbury, C. Gowans, O'Sullivan, Mackenzie, Thomas, Williams. Glenelg: Murphy, Allen, Kirkby, Willoughby, Mills, Ruwoldt, Mules.
GOALS: Central: Sansbury 4.0, Spurr, J. Gowans 2.0, Schell 1.2, Williams, O'Hara, Slade 1.0, O'Sullivan 0.2, L. Westhoff, Giles, Havelberg 0.1, rushed 0.2. Glenelg: Kirkby 4.1, Ruwoldt 2.3, Fisher, Block, Murphy, Hall, Button 1.0, Willoughby 0.2, Backwell, B. Kane, McConnell 0.1, rushed 0.4.
Umpires: T. Philp, G. Fita, C. Bowen.

HIGH POINT: Glenelg's Todd Grima soars for a big mark in yesterday's second semi-final thriller at AAMI Stadium. Picture: RAY TITUS

CENTRAL BULLDOGS											GLENELG TIGERS											
Kicks	Mks	Hbl	F/for	F/og	Gls	Pts	H/O	Tkl			Kicks	Mks	Hbl	F/for	F/og	Gls	Pts	H/O	Tkl			
COCHRANE	7	4	4	-	1	-	-	1			ADLINGTON	3	-	5	1	1	-	-	3			
DUTSCHKE	2	1	3	1	2	-	-	1			ALLEN	4	-	12	2	1	-	-	3			
GILES	7	5	3	1	-	-	1	11	1	1	BACKWELL	12	1	6	2	3	-	-	3			
GOODREM	5	2	2	2	2	-	-	1			BLOCK	8	-	5	-	2	1	-	-			
J. GOWANS	13	4	5	3	1	-	-	4			BUTTON	3	1	3	1	1	1	-	2	2		
C. GOWANS	6	5	7	1	4	2	-	2			CRANSTON	2	5	10	1	2	-	-	15	3		
HAVELBERG	4	3	1	-	2	-	1	3			FISHER	13	4	6	2	-	1	-	6			
JENNER	3	1	1	1	1	-	-	3			GRIMA	9	8	3	-	1	-	-	-			
LAWRY	8	5	1	-	-	-	-	1	3		HALL	13	8	2	1	1	1	-	1			
MackENZIE	6	-	1	1	1	-	-	21	4		KANE	9	2	9	2	-	-	-	-			
O'HARA	10	1	2	2	1	1	-	4			KIRK	5	4	4	-	1	-	-	2			
O'SULLIVAN	12	4	5	2	1	-	2	6			KIRKBY	11	7	-	2	1	4	-	1			
SANSBURY	12	8	3	-	1	4	-	1			McCONNELL	2	2	3	-	-	-	-	1			
SHELL	9	7	4	-	-	1	2	-	2		MEYER	12	5	7	2	1	-	-	1			
SIBENALER	5	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1		MILLS	5	4	7	2	-	-	-	3	3		
SLADE	6	5	8	1	2	1	-	9			MULES	5	4	11	-	-	-	-	1			
SPURR	13	7	9	1	3	2	-	1	2		MURPHY	15	7	6	-	-	1	1	4			
SWITALA	9	3	3	1	2	-	-	1			PANOZZO	12	4	8	3	-	-	-	1	1		
THOMAS	14	2	3	2	2	-	-	3	3		RUWOLDT	14	5	4	3	1	2	3	-	1		
WESTHOFF	3	4	2	-	2	-	1	1	2		SELLAR	4	3	2	-	2	-	-	12	2		
WILLIAMS	7	6	4	-	-	1	-	1	2		WILLOUGHBY	17	4	8	4	1	-	3	-	2		
Totals	161	78	72	20	28	12	9	39	56		Totals	178	78	121	28	20	11	13	36	36		

two goals within the opening three minutes of the third term, the Tigers' lead had ballooned to 21 points, their confidence swelled and the Dogs were on the back foot and struggling for avenues to goal. Glenelg had issues in front of goal, however, and will rue missed opportunities.

Central took advantage and after goals to Spurr and Matthew Slade early in the final quarter, it could sniff victory. In-form Eddie Sansbury kicked successive goals midway through the term and the reigning premier was well and truly back in business. Glenelg coach Mark

Mickan hung his head in his hands, admitting to being shattered when the siren ended the game he believes got away. "All the players were low after the game," Mickan said. "I said to them 'we are feeling the same at the moment and it is a tough loss'. We are not

going away feeling sorry for ourselves. When you consider we kicked 4.9 to 7.2 in the second half after being ahead at half-time ... to go down like we did. At the moment we are feeling the pain and we will work through that and come out bigger and stronger."

Mickan on top - now for the flag

WARREN PARTLAND

GLENELG'S Mark Mickan has been honoured by his peers with the SANFL Coach of the Year award.

It is the second successive year Mickan, in his fourth season at the club, has won the title, which is determined by votes from the nine league coaches.

Having taken the Tigers to last year's grand final, Mickan is now focused on ending a 23-year drought and helping Glenelg claim the premiership.

Not since 1986 has Glenelg raised the Thomas Seymour Hill trophy in triumph.

It has been 23 years of frustration, heartache and misery sprinkled with some hope. But mostly it has been a time of frustration, heartache and misery.

Little wonder pessimism has become second nature for many Tigers supporters. Those same fans, however, are daring to believe.

Maybe, just maybe, the current crop of Tigers has what it takes to earn the right to transport the premiership trophy back along Tapleys Hill Road to their home at the Bay.

For the second successive year the club claimed the minor premiership but there is growing confidence Central District, the modern power of the SANFL and conqueror of the Tigers in last year's decider, is ready to be leashed.

Glenelg will go into tomorrow's second semi-final as favourite, especially given the Bulldogs will be without talented duo Ian Callinan and Andrew Hayes.

Glenelg legend Peter Carey, skipper of the 1985-86 premiership sides, believes the Tigers are a superior outfit to last year and the flag is definitely within grasp.

"The development of the side has been great and it must be a good chance," Carey said.

SANFL TOMORROW

FIRST SEMI-FINAL

AAMI Stadium 12.10pm

SECOND SEMI-FINAL

3.10pm

"The club is getting close (to winning the premiership) and we will have to wait for the next couple of weeks to see how it pans out.

"Central District is a good side and would be a fantastic side to knock off."

The clubs have met twice this season, with the Bulldogs crushing the Tigers in the Anzac Day clash before the reigning premiers squandered a four-goal advantage late in the game to allow Glenelg to escape with a draw.

Glenelg goes into the encounter on the back of a week's rest, the reward for finishing the minor round two games clear of the second-placed Dogs.

The Bulldogs looked headed for defeat in the qualifying final when 13 points down against Sturt midway through the final quarter of the tight contest.

But as has become the Bulldogs' way in finals, they rallied with typical spirit to earn the right to challenge the Tigers this weekend for the first spot in the grand final.

"We gave up some (cheap) goals to Sturt and they are hard to come by in finals," Bulldogs coach Roy Laird said.

"Our ball movement needs to be more efficient out of defence and going forward. We need to score more freely than last week and that needs an attacking mindset."

RESERVES

FIRST SEMI-FINAL
Sturt v Glenelg - City Mazda Stadium, tomorrow 11.15am
Sturt: Anderson, Avery, Barnes, Bartlett, Bateman, Brimacombe, Button, Davey, F. Evans, Harms, Jones, Kay, Lee, McDonald, McIntyre, Miles, Myles, Paynter, Scott-Toms, Smith, Twopeny, Wilson.
Glenelg: A. Grima, Hinge, Sverdlhoff, McGregor, Day, Snook, Couch, C. Kane, Fosdike, Sugars, O'Grady, Pekin, Clayfield, Lally, McGinty, Vallance, Carey, Hitchcock, Hill, Basir.

UNDER-18
SECOND SEMI-FINAL
Glenelg v Sturt - AAMI Stadium, Sunday 9.10am
Glenelg: Ramsey, Francis, Pitt, Bradley, Snook, Scott-Collings, McIntyre, Bails, Longbottom, Cane, Venning, Howard, Noonan, Fox, Agnew, Jolly, Lockett, Giddings, Teakle, Tape, Armfield, Jackman, McCarthy, Bennett, McCarthy. Black shorts. Report 7.15am.
Sturt: Laube, Hansen, A. Wilson, Harms, Greenslade, Lawrie, Hughes, Shearwood, Fotheringham, Male, Stephens, Thompson, Homsch, O'Malley, Calabrese, Johnston, Ellis, Taverner, J. O'Sullivan, Cumow, M. O'Sullivan, P. Wilson, Day, Clarke, McLeay.

RECRUITING COUP | Mills to Bays' rescue



BREAKAWAY: Glenelg full back Wayne Mills bursts away from North Adelaide's Clint Alleyway with the sort of assistance that has become the norm from Tigers ruckman Trevor Cranston, who puts in a strong shepherd. **Picture:** RAY TITUS

Rock solid at the back

WARREN PARTLAND

WHEN Glenelg lost Paul Sherwood to retirement and Sam Rudolph opted for a football sojourn to travel overseas, there were serious questions hanging over the Tigers' defence going into this season.

The pair had been consistent, highly productive performers for the Tigers and key ingredients in the charge at last year's premiership, which ended when beaten by Central District in the grand final. Tigers fans need not worry.

Wayne Mills, cut from the Brisbane list after 16 AFL games, has imposed himself on the SANFL after accepting an invitation from coach Mark Mickan to move to Adelaide.

Mills, just 22, has played in all but one game and been a rock deep in defence.

"It's been really good and I've loved it so far," Mills said. "I didn't know much about the SANFL other than it was a strong competition - there is a lot more one-on-one than I was used to."

Raised on a diet of rugby in northern New South Wales, Mills opted to move to the Gold Coast to have a crack at Australian football.

He was picked up by the Lions where he trained alongside the likes of Jonathan Brown, using the opportunity

to learn from the superstar forward. After playing just one game for the Lions last year - when they came from eight goals down to beat the Power at AAMI Stadium in round four - Mills became available for the Tigers when delisted.

"I saw it (delisting) coming," said Mills, who has signed until the end of the 2010 season. "I'd not been given many opportunities, so I could see it coming. It was disappointing but life goes on. Mark (Mickan) gave me a call and the club brought me down to Adelaide for a weekend. They are a good bunch of blokes."

"Mark is a good coach and knows what he is talking about. He likes us to play by his rules."

"I hadn't played much full back, mainly centre half-back and a bit up forward and in the guts."

Mills is confident the club, which takes on Central District in the second semi-final at AAMI Stadium tomorrow, can go one better than last year and claim the premiership, having lost just two games for the season.

"The Bulldogs have been the benchmark of the competition but if we win this week we are in the grand final," Mills said.

GLENELG v CENTRAL DISTRICT

Second semi-final, AAMI Stadium, Sunday 3.10pm

F	Backwell	T. Grima	Sellar
B	Spurr	Sibenaler	Goodrem
HF	Hall	Kirkby	Block
HB	Cochrane	Lawry	Thomas
C	Ruwoldt	Fisher	B. Kane
C	O'Hara	J. Gowans	Switala
HB	Panozzo	Kirk	Meyer
HF	C. Gowans	Schell	Jenner
B	Mules	Mills	Adlington
F	Dutschke	Havelberg	Slade

RUCK: Cranston, Allen, Murphy.
INT (from): Kellock, Liebelt, Willoughby, McConnell, Button.
INTO 23: Sellar, Meyer.

RUCK: Mackenzie, Williams, O'Sullivan.
INT (from): Giles, Nason, Sansbury, L. Westhoff.
INTO 22: Slade.