

Central top as Bays hit skids

THE WRAP

TOP GOAL

It had been a quiet day for Jack Gunston before his blinder late in the third term. With the howling gale behind him the Crows-listed youngster snapped and hoped from 50m – and scored an unlikely major that punctuated an otherwise ugly quarter.

TOP MARK

It was anything but a day for big grabs, but Andrew Hayes' clunk late in the first term defied the conditions. As Glenelg tried to clear its defensive 50m zone Hayes leapt, crashed and spun through the air but dragged the ball to the ground. The mark set up the Dogs' second goal of the day.

TURNING POINT

Gunston's first in the third term gave Centrals fans some voice, but when Eddie Sansbury threaded another barely a minute later it was out to a 26-point difference. The Tigers had only kicked two for the day until then, and even the aid of a howling gale in the final quarter wasn't going to save them.

BEST ON GROUND

Given how tough it was, a handful would qualify. Eddie Sansbury was creative up forward for Centrals, Daniel Havelberg's four-goal haul was worth eight and in a losing side, Ty Allen summed up what it takes to grind through a day like yesterday. But Andrew Hayes gets the votes for his consistency. His six clearances with a slippery pill as well as his drive into attack and from defence was crucial.

DISAPPOINTING

Sad to see Benny Mules limp off with a left hamstringing early in second term. Just weeks after celebrating his 150th game, the skipper was forced to withdraw. Fingers crossed he can play a part in the Tigers' finals push.

DOGGIES FLOOD

It wasn't just the rain – early in the third quarter all 36 men were grouped in a pocket with just 50m separating the widest two. With no player on Centrals' defensive side of the centre square, Glenelg forward Alex Grima soccered forward three times on a 100m fast break before big Yves Sibenaler laid a telling smother.

» Scott Walsh

CENTRAL District regained the minor premiership – and the swagger missing in recent losses to the Eagles and Sturt – with a 25-point win over Glenelg at Elizabeth yesterday.

The Bulldogs earned the right to be favourites for a fourth successive flag, and left the Tigers stuck in the mud, with a victory built on desire and determination.

Led by kamikaze midfielder Andrew Hayes and forward line threats Daniel Havelberg and Eddie Sansbury, the Bulldogs were never headed in terrible weather conditions.

They now have the week off, while Glenelg is left counting the cost of a morale-sapping defeat and the potential absence of skipper Ben Mules (hamstring) and midfielder Matthew Bode (back) from next week's qualifying final.

Central coach Roy Laird said he was pleased to earn the week off, particularly after such a bruising encounter in which his side had a 62-42 edge in tackles.

"To have any week (off) at this time of year is valuable," he said. "You can look after some sore bodies and get some work into others."

"And I wouldn't want to be picking myself up after a game like that."

Riding a seven-game winning streak into the match, the Tigers reverted to their inefficient ways of last season by kicking just 3.7 for the day – all three goals coming from free kicks.

Tigers coach Mark Mickan said: "I thought the second quarter, when we only managed 2.5 ... it was one of those days where you needed to make the most of your opportunities and that would have put us ahead at half time."

"There was a lot more to it than that, though."

The Bulldogs got the jump on the Tigers early.

Havelberg was on fire in attack and midfielders Hayes and Ryan Williams threw their bodies around in the middle of the ground.

Havelberg took three marks and had four shots on goal for a return of 3.1 in the first 20 minutes, as the Dogs raced to a 19-point lead at the first break.

Attacking to the southern end of the ground became all but impossible from this point, as the Tigers pressed forward aim-



ing to eat into the deficit. An early goal to Todd Grima gave them a boost but missed shots by Ty Allen and the Grima brothers enabled the Dogs to keep their noses in front by four points at half time.

Central needed to build a defensible lead in the third term, but battled to string any clean football together as every player on the field chased the ball inside the northeastern quarter of the ground.

The Tigers were the first to break out of the quagmire, charging forward, but a superb defensive play by Yves Sibenaler prevented Alex Grima from scoring a fast-break goal.

The break in play benefited the Bulldogs, allowing them to move the ball down the western side of the ground to Havelberg who marked and kicked truly from 40m to put the Bulldogs in front by 14 points.

The game appeared evenly balanced at this stage.

The Tigers were to come home with the breeze, but with a minute remaining in the quarter, the Dogs flicked a switch.

Jack Gunston snapped truly after Todd Grima was dispossessed across half back and then Eddie Sansbury got on the end of a quick drive forward to give Central a 26-point lead and all the momentum heading into the last quarter.

Glenelg tried to fight its way back but took 14 minutes to kick its first goal of the final term through Angus Lally.

Any spark the Tigers gained from the goal was quickly snuffed out by Scott Dutschke, who kicked the only goal of the game to the southern end, to seal the win.

In the changerooms after the game, Mickan implored his players to quickly move on from the result, but he must be wondering whether his side will ever beat the Bulldogs.

"We've had a good block of form, we won seven games before today, and I think we can regroup pretty quickly and get ready to go," he said.

SANFL ladder

	Team	P	W	L	d	for	agst	Str	pts	%
1	Central District	20	15	5	0	1772	1354	W1	30	56.7
2	Glenelg	20	15	5	0	1878	1507	L1	30	55.5
3	Norwood*	19	11	8	0	1436	1218	L2	22	54.1
4	Eagles*	19	11	8	0	1679	1526	L1	22	52.4
5	Sturt*	19	10	8	1	1521	1408	W3	21	51.9
6	West Adelaide*	19	10	9	0	1274	1335	W2	20	48.8
7	North Adelaide	20	9	11	0	1408	1702	W3	18	45.3
8	Port Adelaide	20	4	16	0	1393	1633	L4	8	46.0
9	Panthers**	20	2	17	1	1442	2120	L16	5	40.5

*YET TO PLAY THIS ROUND **BYE

final score

CENTRAL DISTRICT v GLENELG		Hamra Homes Oval: 2336		TIGERS	
BULLDOGS	3.2	3.4	6.8	7.8 (50)	
TIGERS	0.1	2.6	2.6	3.7 (25)	

BEST PLAYERS: Bulldogs: Hayes, Havelberg, Sansbury, Spurr, Sibenaler, Williams, Jenner. Tigers: Carr, Allen, Panozzo, Cranston, B. Kane. GOALS: Bulldogs: Havelberg 4; Sansbury, Dutschke, Gunston. Tigers: T. Grima, Kirkby, Lally. INJURIES/REPORTS: Bulldogs: Nil. Tigers: Mules (hamstring), Bode (back strain). UMPIRES: Philp, Bowen, Deboy.

CENTRALS

	Kicks	Mks	Hbl	F/for	F/ag	Gls	Pts	H/O	Tkl
BOYD	12	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	2
CALLINAN	10	1	8	2	1	0	1	1	5
DUTSCHKE	4	3	2	0	1	1	1	1	4
GOODREM	8	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	6
GOWANS	9	1	7	4	5	0	0	0	4
GOWANS	8	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	5
GUNSTON	7	2	4	0	0	1	1	1	1
HAVELBERG	8	4	2	1	2	4	1	0	0
HAYES	11	6	13	3	2	0	0	8	4
JENNER	15	1	5	0	0	0	1	0	3
LAWRY	8	4	2	0	2	0	0	3	1
MACKENZIE	7	0	3	1	3	0	0	20	4
MUSOLINO	7	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
REICHERT	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
SANSBURY	14	2	4	0	1	1	1	0	7
SHELL	12	5	2	1	2	0	0	1	2
SIBENALER	7	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0
SPURR	12	4	9	2	2	0	0	0	5
SUTHERLAND	6	4	4	2	2	0	0	15	0
THOMAS	11	2	2	1	2	0	0	1	4
WILLIAMS	10	1	4	1	0	0	0	3	1
Totals	190	44	82	22	32	7	8	54	62

GLENELG

	Kicks	Mks	Hbl	F/for	F/ag	Gls	Pts	H/O	Tkl
ADLINGTON	5	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	3
ALLEN	10	1	6	4	1	0	1	0	3
BODE	5	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
CARR	17	2	5	4	2	0	1	2	8
CRANSTON	7	0	8	1	4	0	0	26	0
GRIMA	7	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	2
GRIMA	12	3	2	4	2	1	1	1	1
KANE	12	4	5	3	0	0	1	0	1
KANE	5	1	5	3	1	0	0	1	2
KELLOCK	6	1	7	1	0	0	0	0	2
KIRK	4	1	2	0	1	0	0	6	0
KIRKBY	9	3	3	2	0	1	0	1	2
LALLY	7	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
MCGINTY	1	0	2	0	4	0	0	6	5
MILLS	9	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	2
MULES	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
MURPHY	10	1	7	1	1	0	0	2	1
PANOZZO	15	4	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
RUDOLPH	12	3	0	1	1	0	0	2	1
RUWOLDT	10	1	3	3	0	0	1	5	3
TENACE	14	1	5	2	1	0	0	0	4
Totals	179	32	83	32	22	3	7	53	42

It's September, so here come Dogs

SCOTT WALSH COMMENT

FINALS football is played more above the shoulders than below, as the old saying goes.

So do it now – save yourself four weeks of wondering and mark down Central District for another SANFL premiership.

The Bulldogs' 25-point win against Glenelg yesterday won't win any prizes in a beauty contest. In fact, it's likely the mud-splattered tape will never be seen again.

But it's what the victory represents that counts for Cen-

tral District – and counts against any of their four finals rivals hoping to stop the decade of domination stretching to an 11th season.

Man for man, Glenelg carried just as much talent into yesterday's fight for top spot as the mighty Doggies. And still Central trudged away with the win, the minor premiership, and the invaluable week's break to recover from the battle.

Why? Rule out the physical component. That either sunk in the ankle-deep puddles sprawling Elizabeth Oval, or

blew away with the out-turned umbrellas. And what was left?

Toughness. Mental toughness. Finals' football toughness.

That is not to say Glenelg lacks the precious stuff. It's just that Central has more of it.

So much was on the line yesterday. For the two best teams in the league this year, this was as close to a major-round game as any they have played this year. It was time to stand up and be noticed.

Glenelg could have secured top spot with a win, taken next weekend off to rest and pulled back some mental ground on

Central – an opponent it hasn't beaten in eight straight efforts.

Instead, the Bulldogs' biggest challenger lost the contest, lost their skipper Ben Mules to a hamstring injury, Matthew Bode to back soreness, and lost the minor premiership.

The only thing they won was a place in the record books, for scoring the lowest total in history against Central District. Their 3.7 (25) tally edged out Woodville-West Torrens' 4.4 (28) disaster on the biggest stage of all – the 2004 Grand Final. Publicly the Tigers will keep their chins up. But inside,

the team will be shattered. And Central? You won't find much emotion on the face of coach Roy Laird. But underneath, there would have been a few quiet fist-pumps last night.

Rightly so. The numbers don't lie, either. The Bulldogs have played in each of the previous 10 Grand Finals. They've won eight.

With a Grand Final shortcut now looming, you get the feeling Central District has the physical side covered. And if yesterday proved any point, everything above the shoulders is in order too.



Rebel yell: Central defender Yves Sibenaler reacts after a tackle on Ruory Kirkby



Down and dirty: Glenelg's Daniel Kirk (left) tackles Central's Ian Callinan in the mud at Hamra Homes Oval yesterday

Picture: Tom Lee