



THE MIRACLE WORKERS

By Peter Cornwall

They were the team that came from nowhere. In a club that had never played in finals in its 13 years of existence ... that had taken five years to even win a game. Glenelg's 1934 premierships team proved miracles can happen.

Expertly coached and brimming with the talent of eight State footballers, the side's meteoric rise is one of the greatest stories in SA sporting annals. Yet as quickly as the first truly great Tigers had arrived, they were gone again. The team dissipated, it was back on the bottom of the ladder the following season and the coaching hero was gone the year after.

When West Adelaide's dual Magarey Medallist Bruce McGregor took the reins as Glenelg coach in 1933, he could not have been prepared for the rollercoaster ride he was about to take. The Bays had only once finished as high as third-bottom in a dozen seasons of league football. In his first season in charge McGregor guided Glenelg to nine wins and eight losses for the club's first winning season, although it finished sixth in the eight-team league.

Just how far the Tigers leapt to snatch premierships glory is borne out by the fact they lost their first three games of the '34 campaign. And the Round 3 defeat against Port Adelaide at Alberton was by the odd 131 points.

But McGregor moulded a side of varied characters from different backgrounds that had a special camaraderie and team spirit. It was laced with some of the names that helped make Glenelg great. There were legends near the end of their careers who were desperate to finish on the highest of notes. There were youngsters who would go on to become greats themselves. And there were honest battlers, dedicated and loyal clubmen. Together they made history.

Glenelg's 1934 premierships team

Top row: Jim Link (doorkeeper), J. Eaves (trainer), H. Dennis (sprigger), J. Page (head trainer), Roy Page (colour steward), AC Hammond (committee), H. Parslow, W. Brunton, A. Hewett, H. Milford, J. Bowker (trainers), CM Faulkner (treasurer).

Second row: SW Brooks (committee), Mel Brock, Murray Whittaker, George King, John Elsdon, Harold Percy, George Johnston, Arch Goldsworthy, Don Carlos, Roger Jacka, Fred Birrell, Len Sallis, TG Barnett (committee).

Third row: Bill Milhinch (committee), Clem Hill, Bruce McGregor (coach), Len Griffiths, William Fisk (vice-president), Albert James, Syd Tolley (chairman), Jack Owens (captain), Ernest Anthoney (president), Keith Olliver (vice-captain), D. Gilmore (vice-patron), Leonard Wells, Ern Rugless (secretary), Lance Cornelius.

Front row: Ron Edwards, Reg Rosewarne, Dudley Shakes, Roy Colyer, Raymond Seeley, Lance Leak, Arthur Link, Glen Hale, Frank Bergin.

Murray Whittaker was 20 and in his first season of league football in 1934. Seventy years later, living in Glenelg and as much a Glenelg man as ever – “Once a Tiger, always a Tiger,” he said – he fondly looked back on those halcyon days.

“There were some champions,” Whittaker said of the 1934 line-up, pointing out almost half the grand final squad played State football at some stage in their careers. George ‘Blue’ Johnston – the 1934 Magarey Medallist – Len Sallis, Jack Owens, Lance Leak, Arthur Link, Roy Colyer, Mel Brock and Lance Cornelius all represented South Australia.

Johnston, Sallis, Owens and Brock all were inaugural inductees in Glenelg’s Hall of Fame, while Link soon joined them.

Whittaker was glowing in his praise for McGregor. “He was a hell of a good fella and a hell of a good coach,” Whittaker said. “He treated everyone the same. Before we went out he’d give a bit of a talk and he finished his speech with ‘always go in and bump and when you bump, bump bloody hard’.”

Whittaker followed Glenelg closely from an early age – hardly surprising considering his uncle was Clem Hill, a Tiger star whose first game was Glenelg’s first win in 1925. “When I was still going to school I used to go down with him to training, carry his kit bag inside and watch them get ready, see what they were doing,” Whittaker recalled. How incredible was it that Whittaker, in his first season, played with Hill in that first premiership – in what was to be Hill’s last game.

Whittaker was called up for his debut at full back against North Adelaide at the Bay. And who should he stand in game No. 1? None other than Ken Farmer, the greatest goalkicker of all, who booted 100 goals in a season 11 years in a row from 1930-40.

Whittaker clearly remembered the daunting assignment. “Ken Farmer was a gentleman. He was a hell of a nice fella,” he recalled. “I walked up to him to stand him and he said ‘Murray’ and I said, ‘Yeah, that’s right Ken’. He said ‘don’t you worry about me, you just play your own game.’” That Whittaker did and he restricted Farmer to just four goals in Glenelg’s crucial win. “They thought I was bloody marvelous – and I thought I was too,” Whittaker said with a laugh. “First game of the next year I stood Farmer on Glenelg Oval. Bingo, he kicked 11 goals.”

It was a different world back in 1934. Murray rode his bike from Hove to Adelaide Oval for the grand final. And what a grand final it was. After scrambling their way into second spot at the end of the minor round, the Tigers had suffered some stage fright and been thumped by Port by 65 points in the second semi-final before battling to a 13-point preliminary final win against Sturt. Port was clear-cut favourite.

“We were the underdogs,” Whittaker recalled, “but we had beaten them in the minor round (by 26 points at the Bay). Bruce McGregor said, ‘you’ve beaten them once, you’ll beat them again.’” And, with the Tigers’ champions standing tall, so it proved.

Silky-skilled centreman Len Sallis won his fifth best-and-fairest award – still a club record – in the 1934 season and he was outstanding in the grand final. So was George ‘Blue’ Johnston, the high-flying ruckman who won the Magarey Medal that unforgettable year. A knee injury prevented him training in the build-up to the grand final but when the game was on the line, with scores level and only minutes remaining, Johnston soared for a trademark high mark and kicked the goal that turned the tide. Glenelg goalkicking legend Jack Owens marked only moments later and booted the 819th goal of a remarkable career. That he is remembered as Glenelg’s first premiership captain is a fitting tribute.

Arthur Link played 167 games and kicked 280 goals for the Tigers and he – along with dashing rover Roy Colyer and half-forward Lance Leak – ran the Magpies off their feet. Colyer booted three goals and was lifted off his feet by McGregor after he had rushed onto the field to hug his victorious charges.

Powerhouse centre half-forward Arch Goldsworthy played the game of his life in the premiership decider. It became a common theme in grand final wins as Peter Carey dominated from centre half-forward in the 1973 triumph, while Stephen Kernahan and Tony Hall won Jack Oatey Medals from the same position in the 1985-86 back-to-back wins. Goldsworthy was most critics’ pick as standout player in the 1934 grand final, booting 4.2 and playing a prominent role in the last-quarter climax.

But, as Owens told the Press after the game, every man on the Glenelg side had put in and pulled his weight. Dudley Shakes had blitzed the Magpies on a wing, Albert James had been as solid as a rock at full back and Harold Percy had rucked strongly and been a constant danger resting at full forward. And Glen ‘Jo-Jo’ Hale and Keith Olliver “shadowed” Port’s Vic Johnson and ‘Bull’ Reval, playing an important role in shutting down the dynamic duo.

Whittaker, at half-back, also was named among the best. Asked how he went, he said with a laugh: “Oh, best on the ground ... B-O-G.” Then he added: “I was just lucky enough to be in the side.”

More than anything from that grand final, Whittaker remembered Hale’s contribution. “One of the reasons we won the premiership was Joe Hale. I can remember we walked back from having our refreshments at three-quarter-time,” he said, recalling Port was mounting a charge. “I was half-back and Joe was back in the pocket. He said ‘I don’t know, Whit, but something’s got to happen.’” Whittaker had no idea what that might be but “halfway through the last quarter it’s on in front of the Giffen Stand. I can see it now and there are fists flying everywhere. There are five Port Adelaides and one Glenelg – that’s Joe. All he’s doing is going around giving them a bit of a flick. Of course in those days you do that and they’re into you. By the time we started again Joe had the Ports rattled. They were all wanting to have a sling at him and they forgot about the ball. Once we got in front, nothing would stop us.”

S.A. FOOTBALL BUDGET

ADELAIDE OVAL

Field Umpire: L. C. THOMAS. Goal Umpires.
S. A. D. Hill and G. Russ. J. F. S. Monten and H. Lingwood Smith.

PORT ADELAIDE.			GLENELG.		
(Black and White) Goals Kicked			(Yellow and Black) Goals Kicked		
1.	JOHNSON, V. (Capt.)		1.	OWENS, J. (Capt.)	
2.	JOHNSON, R.		2.	OLLIVER, K. (Vice Capt.)	
3.	DERMODY, J.		3.	JOHNSON, G. B.	
4.	EDEN, D.		4.	LINK, A.	
5.	JACQUIER, S.		5.	COLYER, R.	
6.	WEEN, S.		6.	PERCY, H.	
7.	HOLLINGSWORTH, A.		7.	SALLIS, L.	
8.	OBST, K.		8.	BROCK, M.	(20th)
9.	HENDER, N.		9.	CORNELIUS, L.	
10.	HOOPER, J.		10.	LEAK, L.	
11.	PRIDEAUX, J.		11.	SHAKES, D.	
12.	BAMPTON, B.		12.	JAMES, A. B.	
13.	QUINN, R.		13.	GRIFFITHS, L.	
14.	REVAL, A.		14.	HALE, G. C.	
15.	WIGHTMAN, C.		15.	GOLDSWORTHY, A.	
16.	WEST, K.		16.	WHITTAKER, M.	
17.	WHICKER, W.		17.	BERGIN, F. V.	
18.	WILKINSON, J.		18.	HILL, C.	
19.	YATES, W.		19.	BIRRELL, R.	
20.	JOHNSON, J.		20.	ROSWARNE, R.	
21.	McFARLANE, J.				
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37.					

1st Qr.	Goals	Behinds	2nd Qr.	Goals	Behinds
2nd Qr.	Goals	Behinds	3rd Qr.	Goals	Behinds
3rd Qr.	Goals	Behinds	Final	Goals	Behinds
Final	Goals	Behinds			



It was a proud day for Glenelg captain Jack Owens, chairman Syd Tolley and the Tigers players as SANFL chairman Thomas O'Halloran presented the 1934 premiership shield at the opening game of the '35 season. From left are: Tolley, Owens, O'Halloran, William Fisk (Glenelg mayor), S. Brooks (committeeman), Glenelg secretary Ern Rugless (both partially obscured), Frank Marlow (SANFL secretary), Glenelg president Ernest Anthony and Tigers coach Bruce McGregor.

6 GLENELG FOOTBALL CLUB. Annual Report—Season 1934.

TO THE MEMBERS.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The report to be submitted to you for season 1934 will no doubt become the most historical that will ever be published in connection with the Glenelg Football Club.

Not only was it the first occasion that we gained a place in the final four, but having secured second position in the minor round your team was able to go on and win the coveted honour of Premiers of the South Australian National Football League Ltd. for season 1934.

The achievement is, no doubt, pleasing to all members and supporters, not only of this Club but also to all lovers of the Australian game of football, and this was proved by the many congratulatory telegrams and letters received by your Committee from almost every State in the Commonwealth.

After starting the season somewhat un auspiciously by losing our first three matches, a gradual improvement was noticeable half-way through the season, which became more pronounced as the season progressed, and culminated in a brilliant victory against Norwood on the Norwood Oval, which carried us into the four.

Perhaps never before in the history of the game (and certainly not since Glenelg has been in the competition) has the fight for the finals been so keen and interesting as was the case in the year under review. No less than six of the eight teams were in the fight right up until the last match.

However, this Club, having secured the second position, also gained the right to what amounted to two chances for the Premiership, as if it was beaten in its first semi-final, still held the right to play the winners of the match between the third and fourth teams, and this is what actually happened.

West Torrens were defeated by Sturt in the first semi-final, and then came the greatest disappointment to members of the Glenelg Club for the season. The next match, being between Port Adelaide and Glenelg, proved a runaway victory for Port Adelaide, the football produced by the Black and Whites being of a very high standard indeed. Nevertheless, our players and Selection Committee were not downhearted, but realised that it would be necessary to improve if we were to have any chance of Premiership honours.

Our Selection Committee stood to its task manfully, and in the face of much adverse criticism from all sides made drastic alterations in the placings of the players, and also in-tone or two instances changed the personnel of the team.

The result was a victory against Sturt after a very hard-fought game, a feature of the match being the manner in which Glenelg stuck to its task in the final stages of the game.

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Having defeated such a strong combination as Sturt, we were not without hope of being able to turn the tables on Port Adelaide, who we were to meet in the grand final and so decide the Premiership, but no word of encouragement was forthcoming, and the result of this match was looked upon as a foregone conclusion by public and press alike. Nothing but a win for Ports could possibly be the outcome of this encounter, we were told, and after all, in view of our previous engagement with this club, such prophesy was to be expected.

However, our players went into the field with a will to win, and were told to go in and take a bump and come back for more, to make the pace fast and keep it fast, never to flinch when the pressure was on. They were also told to get in front, and keep in front, and how all these instructions were carried out to the letter is now history, Glenelg winning a wonderful game by 18-15 to Port Adelaide 16-18.

The game as a spectacle was worth going a long way to see, and we do feel that some of the finest features of the Australian game were brought out in this match.

To the vanquished we offer our congratulations on their fine display of football, and although naturally elated at our success, we can afford to be generous in victory, and realise the keen disappointment that must have been felt by those connected with the Port Adelaide Club.

Much has already been written about our past success, and we feel now that we must bend our energies for further success in the ensuing season.

We expect to have all of last season's players with us again, and with many who were unable to gain a place in the finals, striving still harder this year, it is with confidence we face the future.

Magarey Medallist.

Still another great honour was brought to Glenelg by the winning of the Magarey Medal by our popular ruck man, G. B. ("Blue") Johnston.

Many spectacular games were played by "Blue" and his scrupulous fairness and brilliance (particularly in the air) won for him the high honour. We feel we are voicing the opinion of all supporters of the game when we say that the decision of the umpires was a good one.

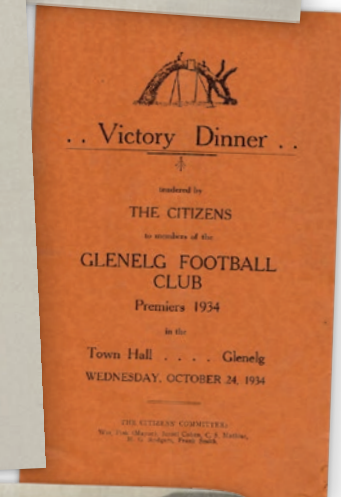
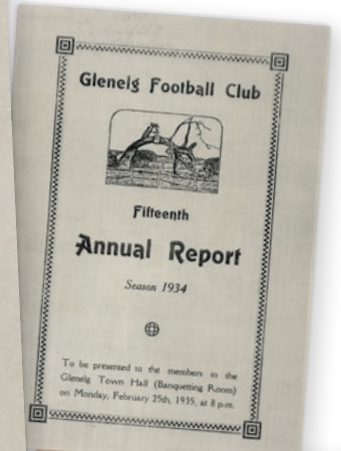
"Blue" is still only comparatively young, and there is no doubt that he will be with us for many seasons to come.

The Glenelg Club is justly proud of his achievement. Our heartiest congratulations are extended.

Socials and Entertainment.

Your Committee deeply appreciates the generous support accorded the Club by its officers and many of our supporters. Never before have we had a more loyal band of helpers.

Our Patron, Vice-Patron, President, and Vice-Presidents entertained us with socials and dinners, and in addition gave us unstinted financial assistance.



Advertisement for THE GLENELG GUARDIAN newspaper. The ad includes the masthead 'THE GLENELG GUARDIAN' and the date 'GLENELG, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1934'. It features several small advertisements: 'Griffiths Bros. TEAS, COFFEES, CIGARETTES', 'LADD'S' (LADD'S HIGH-CLASS MINERAL WATER), 'A PERMANENT WAVE FOR YOU', 'FISH AND CHIPS AT THE REGAL', and 'RUBBER STAMPS'. The main advertisement for the newspaper includes the headline 'GLENELG-PREMIERS 1934' and a detailed article about the team's success.



TWO HARD WORKERS for Glenelg—R. Birrell, who played his first league game in the final, and K. Olliver, vice-captain of the team.



L. LEAK, whose play at half-forward and as a rover for Glenelg has been outstanding during the final series.



Ground Duel by Rovers in Grand Final

THE BIGGER MEN in the left of this picture seem to have shepherded each other out of the play, but two rovers, Hooper (Port) and Colyer (Glenelg), are going for the ball, an incident during the grand final game at Adelaide Oval. The players who can be recognised are (from left)—Ween (Port Adelaide), Wilkinson (Port Adelaide), Hooper, and Colyer.



When it counted, Glenelg skipped away to claim victory 18.15 to 16.18 in what was proclaimed “the most popular win ever witnessed on Adelaide Oval”.

“We came in and everyone’s patting you on the back,” Whittaker said, recalling the players then got stuck into the lime juice that was left over from three-quarter-time. The Glenelg players were feted by thousands of fans that night at Glenelg Town Hall. “When we got down there, there were just that many ruddy people, it was like half the crowd at Adelaide Oval had come down. It was wonderful,” Whittaker said.

It was different then. The players were presented with the souvenir grand final edition of *The Mail* as a bonus. “The year we went top our payment was 10 and sixpence a match. That wasn’t bad – you thought hells bells, this is good, I can go to the pictures twice,” Whittaker said.

1934 GRAND FINAL

GLENELG 5.4 10.8 15.10 18.15 123	PORT ADELAIDE 3.4 6.13 11.17 16.18 114
BEST: Goldsworthy, Sallis, Colyer, Link, Johnston, Leak, Shakes, Whittaker, James, Percy SCORERS: Goldsworthy 4.2, Owens 3.3, Colyer, Johnston 3.0, Bergin 2.1, Percy 1.5, Link 1.3, Leak 1.0, rushed 0.1	BEST: Reval, Dermody, Quinn, Hooper, Eden, Hollingworth, McFarlane, Ween SCORERS: Quinn 5.2, Hollingworth 4.7, Prideaux 4.2, Hender 2.1, Reval 1.1, Yates, Ween 0.2, Hooper 0.1
UMPIRE: IC Thomas	CROWD: 30,045 at Adelaide Oval

THE WINNING TEAM

- F:** Arthur Link, Harold Percy, Jack Owens.
HF: Lance Leak, Arch Goldsworthy, Frank Bergin.
C: Dudley Shakes, Len Sallis, Clem Hill.
HB: Murray Whittaker, Mel Brock, Fred Birrell.
B: Glen Hale, Albert James, Len Griffiths.
1R: George Johnston, Keith Olliver, Roy Colyer.

19th man: Reg Rosewarne

G L E N E L G

(Football Premiers 1934.)

G – L – E – N – E – L – G

Seven letters, as we see,
 Set up, that no reverse
 Finds them anyway the worse.
 Read them backwards if we will,
 There’s Glenelg before us still.
 As the letters, so the men
 In the football field, for when
 In their semi-final bout,
 Port men beat them to a rout,
 All their prospects looked so flat
 Critics simply said, That’s that!
 Yet though that match found them slack,
 Soon they staged a great comeback!
 Definitely they outplayed
 Sturts; then meeting Ports they made
 History, by winning well,
 Practically from bell to bell.
 Backmen Griffiths, James and Hale
 Very seldom seemed to fail;
 Birrell, Whittaker and Brock
 Stemmed the tide of many a shock;
 Centres Sallis, Shakes and Hill
 Added brilliance to their skill.
 Bergin, Goldsworthy and Leak
 Were a trio at their peak;
 Owens, Percy, Colyer, too,
 Showed what forwards ought to do;
 Johnson, Oliver and Link
 Shone like stars, so let us drink
 Good health and prosperity
 To G – L – E – N – E – L – G.

– Anon

From *The Times and Northern Advertiser*,
 Peterborough, SA, 12 October 1934