

# GREAT THINGS HAPPEN

By Peter Cornwall



5 June 2021. A day of history. In the centenary year, no less.

Glenelg's women's team had made plenty of history in its five years in the competition. And in 2021 the Tigers already had played in the first SANFL Women's game held on historic and iconic Adelaide Oval. And, to add to the drama, the clash with Sturt ended in a draw. The Blues had kicked a last-gasp goal to split the difference and Glenelg was left desperately disappointed with just two wins from the first six games of the season.

But the game proved a turning point. Suddenly, the Tigers started winning the close games, hanging on to beat Central District by three points in the next round. They started believing. Lucy Earl's wrist was strapped every game and written on it in texta were the words: PLAY YOUR ROLE ... BELIEVE. "Every match I put this on my wrist and when you believe, great things happen," she declared. Just two months after the Adelaide Oval experience Earl, and Glenelg, were in a grand final. They had won every game since. They believed. History beckoned.

A goal from the first bounce sure can set the tone for a grand final. Glenelg's men's teams conceded a goal in the opening minute of the 1950 and 1969 premiership deciders and it was a sure signal for a long day ahead.

Glenelg's women's team could not have made a stronger statement to kick off the 2021 grand final against West Adelaide at Thebarton Oval.

There were positive signs even before the first bounce. The closeness of a team is critical to premiership success. And the Tigers could not have been closer in their pre-game huddle – the antithesis of social distancing – as skipper Ellie Kellock issued last-minute instructions.

Ruck ace Caitlin Gould started it all off after the first bounce was nullified and Westies' talented 15-year-old SANFLW Player of the Year Lauren Young looked to fire out a handball. Desperate Gould intercepted the ball, burst between a couple of West players and dashed clear, kicking long over the pack and into the forward 50 where Chelsea Packer ran onto it and kept knocking it towards the goal. Madison Freeman snared the ball cleanly and shot out a handball to Jess Searle, whose right-foot snap went right between the uprights as the clock ticked over to 24 seconds.



Glenelg women's coach Jason Fairall reckoned the last piece of the puzzle for his side was believing. Lucy Earl was determined to remind herself.



Above: There were some timely messages before the first bounce, in the changerooms and on the banner. It was time - and Glenelg stormed to the 2021 SANFLW flag.

Top: Glenelg's women have plenty of this and it's their trademark. "You play with heart," coach Jason Fairall said. "When someone does something out on the field, that's heart, if someone goes against it, that's not heart or get your mind into heart." It's a trigger that goes hand-in-hand with 'All in, discipline, tough' that's what the men's team is all about, too. And then there's 'Grrr'. "That's Sam Franson. That's hers. She's one of the most positive people you will ever have in a program."

"I grabbed Caitlin by the jumper and said, 'we're on here ... we're on,'" Kellock said. "I had a true belief we were going to win from that moment. Everyone was ready to go."

Gould, whose performance in overwhelming Norwood danger Leah Cutting was crucial to the Tigers' stunning second semi-final win, set up their second goal at the 11-minute-mark, when she handballed under pressure from a ruck contest to her superstar Crows team-mate Ebony Marinoff, who dodged a couple of players before finding her trusty left foot for a snapped goal.

The Bays were taking the game on and full back Sheridan Howell, along with Kellock the only survivors from Glenelg's first season, took a punt and dashed off her opponent, providing rebound that ended up with another shot at goal from Marinoff, although this time she missed. Glenelg had been consistently to the ball first and led 2.1 to 0.1 at the first break.

The intensity went up a notch when dangerous Bloods forward Chelsea Biddell ran in for a goal to open the scoring in the second quarter but Sarah Goodwin set Searle up for her second goal, booting the ball out in front of her with a perfectly-weighted long kick. West was showing the Bays wouldn't have it all their own way when Sarah Dargan snapped a goal out of nothing from a pack. But the Tigers women, who live by the 'Heart' trademark, played with plenty of it, producing the one percenters that make all the difference in grand finals. A Goodwin chase and smother in the midfield resulted in a late forward thrust and when Kellock pulled off another smother near the goals, the ball landed at the feet of Jess Bates, whose great snap made it a two-goal advantage at the main break. While the pressure, tackling and smothering had been outstanding, the Tigers also were looking more systematic and connected when they had the ball, linking up smoothly in transition. Glenelg coach Jason Fairall's pre-pre-season skills sessions were paying off as his women constantly hit the mark.

Incredibly, there wasn't another goal scored until the last minutes of the game. But there were some memorable highlights.

For five minutes in the third quarter Gould owned the game. She snared a strong chest mark at centre half-forward only for her shot to be touched through for a behind. Then she marked again, and again. And Gould made it four marks in three memorable minutes when she flew for a ripper grab over a pack. Her long shot just fell short but West must have been wondering what it had to do to make any inroads. The Bloods just couldn't break the Bays down and Marinoff held on to a crucial saving mark in defence to end the quarter.

At the final break Fairall wanted his charges to continue what they were doing. And why not? They were winning the contested ball and the clearances and also on top in the tackle count, even though they had consistently been first to the ball.

Packer was having an influence up forward and her snap around the corner would just about have sealed the deal but it missed by a whisker. Sam Franson missed narrowly as well and on a rare occasion the Bloods took the ball deep into attack, Alice Bradley rebounded strongly.

There are plenty of good stories from Glenelg's remarkable rise to women's premiers. Caitlyn Swanson is one of them. Always dangerous around the goals, Swanson played in the historic first game back in 2017 under lights at The Parade - but for Westies *against* the Bays. Then she played with Sturt. And now, after years battling for wins, in her first season with Glenelg, she twice all but sealed the deal in the grand final. But the bounce of the ball wasn't with her as twice her snaps took untimely detours to narrowly miss.



Top Left: The big crowd and the Tigers bench are just as focused as Grace Duffy as she prepares to launch an attack.

Top Right: Chelsea Packer kicking on as the Tigers prove too tough to handle.

Middle Left: With the historic stand at Thebarton Oval as the backdrop, this team was determined to make history. *Photo: Cory Sutton*

Middle Right: Caitlin Gould dominated the airways as the Bays soared to the flag. *Photo: Gordon Anderson*

Bottom Left: If being in this huddle couldn't inspire you, nothing possibly could. Grace Duffy, Caitlin Gould and Ebony Marinoff are particularly vocal. It's time!

Bottom Right: There's no time quite like it, when the final siren sounds on grand final day and you're in front.



How good is this? Sam Franson leaps onto Ebony Marinoff after she has goaled in a moment of pure gold.  
 Photo: Peter Argent



The minutes were ticking away when Packer produced a stunning shot from deep in the pocket that may or may not have made it over the line for the final goal before Marinoff made sure of it by soccering it through. If there was any doubt about it, the goal decided the best player medal. Marinoff was sensational with 31 disposals, five clearances and two goals. But Gould was just as important with 21 disposals, eight marks (six contested), five clearances and 27 hit-outs. Kellock led the way with six clearances among her 15 touches, while Brooke Tonon's 14 possessions and hard running continued to impress Adelaide, the Crows drafting her with pick 20 at the AFL national draft.

Goodwin and Piper Window also provided plenty of dash and inside-50 entries, while Packer was a constant danger in attack and Bates was hard at it in the clinches – as she had been all year, a thoroughly deserving best-and-fairest winner.

Then it was time to complete their slice of history and accept the trophy for SANFLW premiers. Kellock reckoned the thought of having to make a speech made her the most nervous she had been all day. But she got that right, too, thanking coach Fairall, saying, “you’ve turned this club around”.

Marinoff had the best-of-the-field medal draped around her neck. “I am very proud to put these colours on and win their first flag in history,” she declared.

“So good, so good,” Gould said. “We’ve been waiting for this moment for such a long time and Jason is such a great coach, credit to him. The girls worked so hard.”

If ever there was an occasion for a celebration, this was it, Marinoff declaring: “I love this club. So proud. Party!”



The trophy and its new owners in the changerooms after the grand final triumph.





## GRAND FINAL

<b>GLENELG</b> 2.1 4.2 4.5 5.10 <b>40</b>	<b>WEST</b> 0.1 2.2 2.5 2.5 <b>17</b>
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**BEST:** Marinoff, Gould, Kellock, Searle, Goodwin, Howell, Tonon, Packer, Bates, Window

**GOALS:** Marinoff, Searle 2, Bates

**CROWD:** 2000 at Thebarton Oval

## THE WINNING TEAM

- F:** Ebony Marinoff, Meara Girvan, Madisyn Freeman
- HF:** Jess Searle, Chelsea Packer, Sam Franson
- C:** Grace Duffy, Ellie Kellock, Piper Window
- HB:** Ellen Tyminski, Lucy Earl, Brooke Tonon
- B:** Tamsyn Morriss, Sheridan Howell, Alice Bradley
- IR:** Caitlin Gould, Tessa Kohn, Jessica Bates
- Inter:** Caitlyn Swanson, Madeliene Green, Laura Chigwidden, Sarah Goodwin

The stars of the grand final, Caitlin Gould and Ebony Marinoff, become acquainted with the premiership cup.

