



## HISTORY/MAKER

By Peter Cornwall

A lot of people reckon history is a bunch of old people and dates from long ago that don't mean anything to them in our modern world. Well, that couldn't be further from the truth when you have a look at Glenelg women's football star Ellie Kellock. She's just 25 but how much history do you reckon she has created or been a part of already?

Ellie played in Glenelg Football Club's first SANFLW team in 2017, against West Adelaide.

It was Glenelg's first win.

It was the first night of SANFL women's footy – at Norwood Oval on Friday, 17 February.

She made the first tackle for a Glenelg player.

She kicked Glenelg's final goal that night – the Tigers' 10th and that remained a club record until Round 11 of the 2021 premierships season. She played in that game, too, when Glenelg beat the Eagles by a record margin of 11.6 to 0.4.

She played in Glenelg's first final – against North in 2019, a two-point loss.

In Glenelg Football Club's centenary season of 2021, she captained the Tigers side that played in the first SANFLW clash at Adelaide Oval, against Sturt. It was the women's team's first draw.

Ellie played in Glenelg's first final win – a 23-point second semi-final triumph against Norwood in 2021.

She became Glenelg's first women's premierships captain when the Bays beat West in their first grand final appearance, at Thebarton Oval in 2021, winning that one by 23 points too.

Not having missed a game since Round 5 in the 2017 season, it was her 45th game in a row. Her run ended up on 48 successive games – a record for the Tigers' women's side.

In 2022 she became the first Glenelg women's player to reach the 50-game milestone. Her total of 60 games, not surprisingly, also is a record.

And, after the sixth season of SANFLW footy in 2022, Kellock had tallied the most kicks for anyone in the competition's history – with 612.

Now that's what you call making history, while setting a few records along the way.

When Kellock started out playing junior netball with Burra you could hardly have guessed how she was going to make her mark as a football history-maker. But there was a hint. Ellie was particularly combative, with a physical approach to get her hands on the ball probably more typical on a footy oval. She loved the rough and tumble and she loved footy, too. "As a junior I wanted to play football up home ... I come from Farrell Flat in the Clare Valley," Kellock said. "I played netball for Burra and I always wanted to play football but because the time for netball was the same as football I was never able to do it. It wasn't until I came down to school in Adelaide I had the opportunity. The things you do to get out of school, hey?"





Opposite: They are like family, so this is a pretty good pic for the photo album. Captain Ellie Kellock and coach Jason Fairall with the premiership trophy.

Above: Ellie Kellock leads Glenelg onto the field for the first time as captain, against Sturt at Elizabeth Oval to kick off the 2021 campaign. She is supported - as always - by fellow leaders Sam Franson and Chelsea Packer.



Above: Ellie Kellock is glowing as she dashes clear against Central District in 2019.

So she started out in the knockout footy competition in Year 9 with Marymount College, where “I played every sport under the sun”. She made an instant impression. An umpire, noticing her undoubted potential, asked if she would be interested in playing junior club football, so she went out to Morphettville Park.

Being awarded the best-on-ground medal in the under-18 grand final win of 2014 was among an array of personal and team successes she quickly racked up and she played under-18 State footy from 2013-15. But Kellock continued playing netball right through high school with the local Cougars club. A moment clearly was looming when she would have to choose and Morphies coach Narelle Smith told her: “You need to make a decision whether you want to play football or netball – if you are going to take footy seriously there’s going to be a future for it, it’s growing.”

Smith knew what was coming. “There was a lot of talk of it (women’s league football starting up),” Kellock said. “We had been spoken to at State trips that in five years time there’s going to be an AFL comp and everyone was like, ‘yeah, whatever’. A lot of those girls I was playing State with have gone on and played AFL – Sarah Allen, Ash Woodland, Noffy (Ebony Marinoff) – playing great footy at the top-end level.”

Kellock’s last year of netball was 2015 and her timing in concentrating on footy could not have been better. She was quick and hard at it, so it was hardly surprising Smith was eager to have her playing for her. “I just loved the physicality of it ... I always had that physicality on the netball court,”

she said. “Relle pushed me to play ... she has always said if you want it hard enough you will go places.”

Kellock trained with the Adelaide Crows squad as an 18-year-old as it prepared for the debut AFLW season in 2017 and she was zoned to Glenelg as its SANFLW debut loomed. And Smith was the Tigers’ first coach.

“That was all very exciting,” Kellock said. “I didn’t realise how big a deal it was at the time, it’s probably taken me until now to realise how big that first game was and I still remember it.” She recalled her last-minute instructions from Smith and how she carried them out, possibly too well. “I remember the first 30 seconds ... Narelle grabbed me by my jumper and she goes, ‘I don’t care what you do, you run off the half-back and you impact at that contest’. I said, ‘okay, no worries’. And I was so revved up.

“Mum and dad forced my brothers to come down and they brought a few mates, there was a good crowd ... I ran off the half-back and a girl u-turned and ran straight into me.” Kellock’s tackle sure made an impact. The stretcher was called. “I was like, ‘oh, I’ve really hurt someone here but I was also like, I did what the coach told me to do!’” Kellock’s tackle – the first by a Glenelg women’s player – was fair but “solid”. “It hurt me, so it had to hurt her.”

Kellock was setting about making history. As were the Bays, who won their opener by a whopping 53 points. “I look back at it and I’ve been involved in so many firsts,” she said. “First game, first win, first Adelaide Oval, first premiership. It’s mind-boggling.” She loved the memory of that first game.





“I was playing with a lot of girls I had been playing with for a long time, there was so much excitement and hype over it all.”

The awards and accolades continued, Glenelg club champion in 2018, best team player in 2018 and 2020-21, SANFLW Team of the Year in 2019, 2021 and '22. And, most valued of all, being named captain for 2021. “The feeling to be in front of that group of girls, running out onto the oval, was unreal. Very proud,” she said.

And better was to come. Leading her team out on grand final day. Then holding aloft the premiership trophy with coach, great mate and mentor, Jason Fairall.

That didn't come easily, of course. But there were some key moments along the path to premiership glory in 2021. The first was the club's pre-season trip to Darwin, where the men and women both played and they mingled together, worked together and learned from each other. The trip proved the final piece in the puzzle to make Glenelg truly 'One Club'. The men and women were on the same path, instilling the trademarks that are the keys to success with the ultimate aim premiership success in the centenary year.

The women's leaders – Kellock, vice-captain Chelsea Packer, Sam Franson, Emily Woods and Madi Freeman – in Darwin sat in on the men's leaders' meetings. “We always had a standard of what we wanted to bring into our squad but we wanted the elite standard they were driving,” Kellock said. “We decided we would change it from trademark and make it our own rather than feel like we had to follow in the boys' footsteps.” ‘Heart’ was what was required. All-in, discipline and tough were key words, as they had been in the men's 2019 premiership success.

But, after Round 6 of the 2021 campaign, the Bays were sixth with two wins, so there was plenty of work to be done. It started with some tough talks involving the players, the leadership group and the coaches. Anyone should feel comfortable calling out anyone else. Everyone was accountable and everyone made changes to find the formula needed for team harmony and success.

“And that's where that standard grew from. The coaches allowed us to drive it, it wasn't enforced by them, it was a player driven thing.”

Everyone was connected and close losses were replaced by narrow wins, then big wins. Kellock and coach Fairall had a special connection from the start.

“When I first came out here, in the changerooms at West Adelaide, it might have been my first game I was involved in and out of nowhere she's gone bang and blindsided me and it's not the only time she's done it,” Fairall said of Kellock, who made him feel particularly welcomed. “My chiro actually thanks Ellie a lot. She will just bump you for the sake of it.”

“After our season it was my birthday and she travelled from way down south up to my house at Semaphore and brought a present for me. It was a framed picture of her from a Mad Monday trip she had at Morphies once and she's got a West End tat on, she's dressed up like a truckie and it sits over my bar now. And she wrote a beautiful message on the back. She calls herself my football daughter. She's a ripper.”

Fairall happens to admire her footy as well. “She's our most influential player,” he said. “I can't speak highly enough about her. This club could not ask for a better captain.”

Kellock said: “It's not only Jason who is invested, it's his whole family. They're so gorgeous. Leonie does so much for us, Callum comes out and trains with us because he's just obsessed with football and then there are Lachlan and Mitchell.

“I get messages from Jason all hours of the day and night ... he just wants the best for the girls. He wants women's football to grow and grow, he wants it to be a pathway not only for the players to be fed into the AFL system but coaches, too. He wants female coaches, I think it says a lot about him that he recognises there's not enough of them and he wants to train them to be a part of it.”

More than anything, Fairall is all about preparation. The Tigers could hardly have been better prepared when the grand final rolled around.

Kellock will never forget the feeling when the players sang the club song in the centre of the ground after the win – with supporters, friends, family and Glenelg's men's team all singing along. “That was unreal ... we were that excited and that emotional.” It defined the all-in, everyone's equal, everyone's a part of it everyone had been searching for. Everyone was enjoying the history that had unfolded before their eyes. Something Kellock was becoming used to.

Top: 'Tis just a scratch.' There was no way Ellie Kellock wasn't playing on.

The gold boots Ellie Kellock wore in the 2021 grand final triumph are on display at the club.

