

A SECOND TERM BLITZ

DROMANA V FRANKSTON

ROUND: 2 - 2019

Reference: 2021/11



A memorable exhibition of team football at Pier Street in April 2019

INTRODUCTION

Having claimed the Division: 2 premiership flag in 2018, Dromana won promotion to MPNFL Division: 1 in 2019; and a new chapter in the story of Dromana FNC unfolded. Although the club had been promoted from 'B' Grade to 'A' Grade in 1940, the circumstances, of that era, offered little real comparison to the league structures of 2019.

The other clubs in Division: 1 in 2019 were: Frankston, Mornington, Rosebud, Sorrento, Bonbeach, Frankston YCW, Pines, Edithvale -Aspendale and Mt Eliza.

ROUND: 1 VICTORY

Dromana had secured a convincing 33 point victory over Rosebud in the 'local derby' the previous week; and, in so doing, secured the Matthews Shield. It was an impressive victory and upset some of the local pundits. However, the Round:2 clash, against the Frankston Bombers, promised to sort the 'wheat from the chaff.'

Dromana's coach, Rikki Johnston, was under no illusion about what the challenge presented; and he knew it would be a 'litmus test' for his young team. The one and only, Vince Lombardi once said...

"Football is like life - it requires perseverance, self-denial, hard work, sacrifice, dedication and respect for authority."

Vince Lombardi had a ingenious way with words ; and when that quote is actually ‘boiled down’ it simply means being: ‘an honest team member’ ; and Rikki Johnston had assembled a group of boys who were both: (i) authentic in their approach to football and (ii) single-minded to take on the ‘very best.’

THE LINE-UP V FRANKSTON

The clash against Frankston was eagerly anticipated; and the outcome would be an early guide to Dromana’s relative strength in the top echelon of Peninsula football. The game was played at Pier Street on April 13th 2019; and the Tigers’ line up that day was:

BACKS	Will Gregson Ryan Smythe Zac Muschiali Billy Quigley Matt Gahan Rohan Bleeker
MIDFIELD	Reece Wilde Andy Howison Beau Cosson Rory Gregg Sam Geurts Josh Bateman.
FORWARDS	Terry Wheeler Billy Geurts Dane Leyden-Kozaris Sam Fowler Jake Hiep Ethan Johnston
I/C	Rikki Johnstone Jake Milward Beau McMurray Aidan Musgrave.

The game attracted a sizeable crowd; and, by starting time of the game, the best vantage points on the hill and near the scoreboard had a good sprinkling of Tiger fans. Prior to the first bounce, former Dromana and Rye player, Ken Myers, unfurled the 2018 Premiership pennant.

Warm applause greeted the raising of the flag; and it was a jubilant occasion for players, officials and supporters. It was the club’s seventh pennant (the others being 1931, 1937, 1940, 1950, 1971, 2013 and 2018). The hoisting of flag (as shown below) offered significant satisfaction to the elderly members of DFNC who had supported the club through the darkest of years as well as its brightest days of triumph.



Dedicated officials and DFNC stalwarts, Brian Lees and Bob Williamson, with the team members enjoyed the unfurling of the 2018 premiership flag.



The 2018 MPNFL Division: 2 Premiership flag was unfurled.

The first quarter was a dour struggle as both teams sought 'the advantage' and pathways to goal. There were no 'beg your pardons' and it was hard-hitting football as opposing players wrestled for early supremacy. It was a typical Frankston-Dromana contest; and it was nothing that was unexpected.

Rikki, who was into his 16th season of MPNFL football, had cautioned his young team about how the Bombers would 'test the mettle.' Goals were few and far between; and at quarter time, the home team lead by seven points.

THE SECOND QUARTER BLITZ

Sometimes in life and football, surprises are 'just around the corner'; and what Dromana unleashed in that second term flummoxed the Bombers and delighted the Dromana faithful.

The first term had given no indication of what was to follow that day. However, what was unleashed was stunning. Several 'old timers' said that the second term was one of the most devastating displays of team football that they had ever witnessed at Pier Street. It was exciting to watch as the Tigers mauled Frankston at every turn and every bounce.



**Sam Fowler was 'electric' in several passages of play.
Sam has played two games with Collingwood in the VFL in 2021.**

It was as though someone had ‘thrown the switch’ as the Dromana midfield took control and the forwards Sam Fowler , Ethan Johnstone, Terry Wheeler and Josh Bateman exploded into action and they mesmerized the Bombers; defence. In a matter of minutes, in that unforgettable term, Frankston fell by the wayside as Dromana plundered every opportunity across the midfield,

CHAMPAGNE FOOTBALL

The Dromana supporters were energized by the exhibition of the young Tigers. It was ‘champagne football’ and there was so much to like in the way Dromana took charge of affairs.

The three features of the Dromana forward line were : (i) the pace the small running forwards, (ii) the ability of the Tigers to find space; and (iii) the willingness of all players to share the ball. It was ‘team football’ at its best. Goals came thick and fast; and with those goals produced further centre bounces and more opportunities to win clearances.

The Geurts brothers, Reece Wilde and Beau McMurray were dangerous; and the ruck work of Rory Gregg gave the Dromana midfielders first use of the ball. There were nine centre bounces in the second term and Dromana rarely ‘wasted one’



Reece Wilde boots the Tigers into attack.

It was stirring to watch; and the highlight of that quarter was the second and third efforts in ‘mopping up’ and converting half chances into possessions.

While the attack went on a ‘dance’, the backs were ‘mean and hungry’ and denied Frankston any breathing space. As the score line indicated, the Bombers were held goal-less in that first half of football. The contrast was stark. Dromana looked like a well-oiled machine while the Bombers spluttered and stalled and couldn’t ‘get off the ground.’

Great credit was given Zac Muschialli for the manner in which he led a backline while Matt Gahan, Ryan Smythe and Rohan Bleeker were safe and uncompromising. It was a near-perfect lockdown that stifled the Bombers.

The Tiger had clear winners across all lines. In the second term, the Tigers booted eight goals; and the pleasing thing, from a coaching aspect, was the spread of goal kickers. (see below in the match details).



Matthew Gahan – A dedicated and disciplined youngster with enormous potential who is now playing with Southport FC in the VFL (i.e. 2021).

THE SECOND HALF- A DIFFERENT STORY

The second half of the match was a contrast as Frankston, with its reputation clearly ‘on the line’ rebounded with forceful intent. The third term was a tight and tough contest as Frankston clawed its way back into the game. However, the damage had been done; and , as those who have played football appreciate, ‘catch up’ football is both demanding and draining.



New Zealander, Andrew Howison was a big part of Dromana’s rise in MPNFL football. Andrew was thoughtful, respected and an ideal role model for young footballers.

Matt Gahan, Zac Muschialli , Billy Quigley Ryan Smythe were sound under pressure and Billy Geurts and his brother, Sam, were influential at tipping points of that quarter.

Once again, Billy Quigley was superb. Billy is a 'class act'; and, it is hoped that he will win selection with the Frankston Dolphins (VFL) in the very near future. If so, it will be an apt reward for his loyalty and service at Pier Street.



Billy Quigley – Loyal and true and a 'class act' in AFLSE football.

Dromana's two New Zealand connections Andrew Howison and Will Gregson received kudos for their solid displays that day. Both Andrew and Will were selected again to represent for New Zealand in the International Cup in 2019.

Andrew was captain of the NZ Hawks team in 2018; and he is a natural born leader who has the ability to 'fly under the radar' of most defences with his unobtrusive style of play. Since his arrival at DFNC in 2018, he has been an asset on the ground, a popular figure around the club and a role model for the younger brigade.



Aiden Musgrave worked hard when chances were presented.

Another most promising youngster, Matt Gahan (ex-Balnarring-Red Hill-Dandenong Stingrays) gave a superlative performance and further enhanced his reputation as a 'blue ribbon' teenage footballer.

Some readers may be unaware that Matt's Grandfather, Graham, played 89 games for Richmond, in the period 1959-66; and was regarded as a unswerving half back flanker. There is very chance Matt will follow in his Grandpa's footsteps.



Jake Milward breaks free and sends the Tigers forward.

IN THE 'WASH-UP'

Everyone at the game agreed that Frankston won the second half (six goals to three) but the leeway was too great overcome and the Tigers went onto win by six goals. Furthermore, the performances of the young Tigers' had signalled to the rest of the league that they were competitive, skilled and buoyant.



An impressive victory to enjoy together

Following the win, DFNC coach, Rikki Johnston said...

"It was a really good first half ...we probably tapered off a bit in the second half but under the conditions I thought that the boys played well...We are happy, no injuries and things are going along nicely. We've got a couple of big weeks coming up with YCW and Sorrento; and that will give us a good gauge as to how we measure up against the 'big boys.'

***We are happy with how we are going and the boys are enjoying the challenge."** Source: 'The Leader' April 16th 2019 Page: 2.*



One of the greats at Pier Street-Rikki Johnston.

Of course, successive victories don't make a season but Dromana had cleared the first two hurdles in Division: 1 in style and sat on the top of the ladder. As one long serving volunteer of the club said quietly, when he saw the MPNFL Ladder, after Round: 2 ...

"I never thought I would live to see the day when we sat on top of any table...let alone Division: One."

The youngsters of Pier Street had every reason to approach the next clash, against YCW, with confidence. Winning form is the best form; however, it would have been naïve to think that YCW would crumble under applied pressure as Frankston had done in that second quarter. Time would tell and, as all readers know, it did... and Dromana went from strength to strength in 2019.

MATCH DETAILS

Dromana : 2.1 10.3 13.7 13.10 (88)

Frankston : 0.6 0.6 4.9 6.12 (48)

Goal Kickers for Dromana : S. Fowler 2 J. Hiep 2 B. Quigley R. Gregg E. Johnstone R. Wilde S. Geurts B. McMurray A. Howison W. Geurts J. Milward.

Best Players for Dromana: B. Quigley M. Gahan W. Gregson S. Geurts A. Howison R. Smyth.

REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION

Sources: DFNC Records-MPNFL results -Personal files and statistics.

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Written for DFNC by: Roger Spaul –April 2021.

DFNC website administrator: Graham Stelling. DFNC Secretary-Board Member.

Email contacts:historian@dromanatigers.com.au. or admin@dromanatigers.com.au