

2022 ELIMINATION FINAL

DROMANA STUMBLE IN THE FINAL

Reference: 2023/8



'Up for grabs and all in the balance' at the opening centre bounce of the 2022 Elimination Final at Olympic Park. The photograph shows a portion of the large crowd that enjoyed the dour battle.

INTRODUCTION

As was recorded in the previous article (Reference: 2023 / 7), Dromana Senior XVIII won ten games (tied 2)and finished in fourth position on the MPNFL First Division Ladder ; and as a consequence , was drawn to play Frankston Bombers in the Elimination Final at Olympic Park on Sunday 28th August.

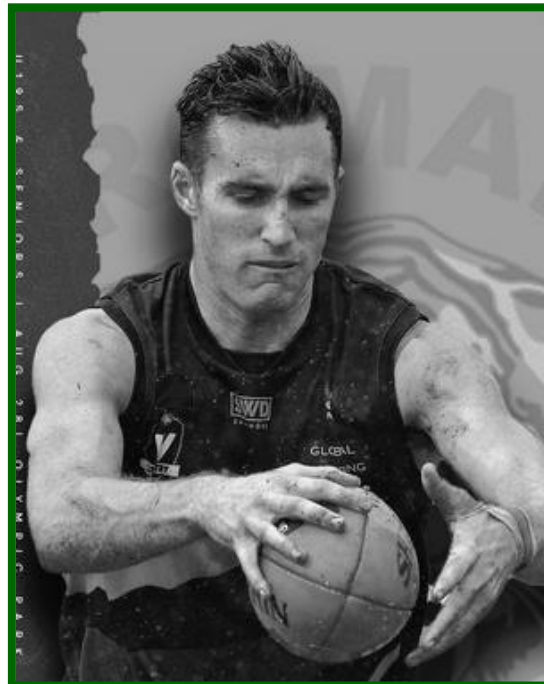
This was the First Division: 1 Final since 2019 (i.e. when Dromana won the flag). As readers will be aware, COVID-19 devastated/interrupted the 2020-21 seasons. The following article is a match review of the 2022 First Elimination Final between Dromana and Frankston Bombers. It is hoped that this report will serve as another chapter in the history of DFNC for future generations to read.

BILLY QUIGLEY DECLARED UNFIT TO PLAY

The major topic on everyone's lips during the build-up to the match was whether one of club's modern-day champions, Billy Quigley, would be able to take his place in the team after sustaining a knee injury in the clash against Bonbeach in Round: 18. Billy, who had grabbed the attention of football pundits with his scintillating performances in 2022, would prove to be an immense loss from the Tigers' line-up.

There was no doubt in the minds of local supporters that DFNC's chances of winning took a huge hit when the news of Billy's unavailability to play 'echoed down' the line.

Not only was Billy the team's captain but he had been a central part of the Tigers' success in 2022. In 18 games, he had booted 25 goals; and had been regularly listed among the team's best players throughout the season. Such losses in any team are hard to cover in the 'pressure cooker' atmosphere of finals football.



One of the hard luck stories of the season. Dromana's champion skipper and key utility, Billy Quigley, was forced to miss the MPNFL Elimination Final because of injury. Considering his brilliance in 2022, Billy's absence was a massive loss to the team.

THE LINE- UP

Despite, the club's position above Frankston on the MPNFL Ladder, Dromana's young team contrasted sharply with the background and experience of Frankston's team. The Dromana team as announced on selection night was:

BACKS	Z. MUSCHIALI	A. MUSGRAVE	D. WAUGH
H BACKS	N. SHANNON	J. TOOTH	J. TAYLOR
CENTRES	R. WILDE	D. GORMLEY	J. HUTCHINSON
H FORWARDS	D. GEURTS	J. ANDREWS	N. COLLIER
FORWARDS	N. HIGGINS	B. TOVEY	T. WHEELER
RUCKS	B. GEURTS	S. GEURTS	J. GEURTS
I/C	D. MARCHESANI, J. RISTROM J. SLATTERY S. CHILDS		
EMERGENCIES	N. SOLIGO A. HARRIS		

NOTE: One change occurred on match day because Nathan Higgins was unable to take his place in the side; and, as a consequence, Nathan Soligo came into the starting twenty-two.

THE FIRST QUARTER

The scene was set for an enthralling battle between the fourth and fifth placeholders on the Division: 1 Ladder. The ground was bathed in sunshine, and, although there was a tricky breeze, the surface conditions were excellent; and a large crowding ringed Olympic Park in anticipation of an intense struggle.

From the very first bounce, Dromana went forward through the agency of veteran of Dan Gormley who found Jay Hutchinson on the lead. Jay's kick hit the post; and, as time would tell, accurate conversion would become a major factor in deciding the outcome of the match.

It was a tough and tight opening stanza; and both teams fought for control. Jay Hutchinson, Reece Wilde, Jai Taylor and Billy Geurts were prominent. Jordy Andrews was the key figure in attack; and he dominated the early proceedings with his strong body work and contested marking.

Dromana registered its first goal of the game, at the nine minute mark, when a long kick from Terry Wheeler sent the ball forward to Jordy Andrews who then kicked truly from a set penalty shot. It was a badly needed major and a just reward for Jordy's pugnacious efforts in attack.



Jordy Andrews drills Dromana's first major in the Elimination Final. Jordy won the club's goal kicking award with 35 goals; and he played an important role in lifting the club into the MPNFL finals in 2022.

The backline led by veteran, Zac Muschialli, was defending grimly and holding the Bombers at bay; and Dean Waugh impressed with his ability to break the lines. It was a physical contest; and the tackling of both teams was fierce as both teams fought for control. Despite the open and wide flanks of Olympic Park, play was often congested; errors were common and turnovers costly.

Dromana's dashing utility player, Dan Marchesani, began to exert influence with his powerful running. Dromana's handball was bold through the midfield, however, on more than one occasion, an adventurous build-up to goal was shattered by a skill error. Billy Geurts' one-handed grab was a highlight of the first term; and his brothers Sam, Daniel and Josh were active and committed in their endeavours.



The MPNFL's foremost ruckman, Billy Geurts takes a spectacular contested one-handed mark in the first quarter of the game. Billy's Herculean effort throughout 2022 continued in the Elimination Final and he was credited with 38 disposals and 9 marks.

Jordy Andrews' was irrepressible, and the Frankston backmen had little answer to his early supremacy. However, poor kicking plagued Dromana; and when the Bombers forwards 'clicked' into a flurry of action, they goaled twice; and, consequently, Dromana trailed by just two points at the change.

In summary, although the Tigers appeared to be the superior combination, scoreboard pressure is paramount in finals; and sadly, the Tigers' solid teamwork was brought undone by blunders at close range. As is often the case, early misses can 'haunt' teams later in a game.

QUARTER TIME SCORES: FRANKSTON 2.2 (14)-DROMANA 1.6 (12)

THE SECOND QUARTER



In a challenging season, Matt guided his team to the MPNFL finals and the chance for another tilt at a Division:1 pennant.

No sooner had the quarter commenced than Frankston had slammed through its third goal. The clock showed that just 13 seconds had transpired; and that major was a sign that the Bombers were primed and galvanized after Beau Muston's address at the quarter time huddle.

It was an old-fashioned 'arm wrestle' between the half back lines; and best described as 'bash and crash' football. The standard of play failed to reach great heights but it was an absorbing contest to witness. At the four minute mark of the quarter, young Nick Collier received a free kick; and calmly kicked the Tigers' second goal to peg back the Bomber's margin. Nick was a shining light in this term; and for one so young, in such an important game, he displayed maturity and focus 'beyond his years.'

The Tigers suffered a blow when Jon Ristrom went down with a dislocated shoulder. It was a serious injury and hospitalization was required. In a half of football where only six goals were registered, it was virtually a battle of the backlines. It must have been frustrating for Dromana's coach, Matt Price, to have watched numerous chances 'go begging.' The Tigers' game plan 'withstood the stress test' of intense pressure but, unfortunately, the Tigers failed to finish off their good work in the forward 50 metre arc.

The absence of Billy Quigley was apparent as the ball rebounded time and time again; and there is no doubt that Billy's experience would have been an immense asset to the Tigers' in such situations.

Nathan Soligo won important possessions and deserved credit for his hard running. As the clock ticked down, Sam Geurts found space, steadied and drilled a 40 metre major. In the context of a low scoring affair, it was a vital conversion which broke a 'picket fence' of behinds; and sparked the Tigers



Dromana players gather to celebrate Sam Geurts' running goal in the second term. In a game where goals were hard to 'come by' Sam's major lifted the Tigers.

The Tigers probably over-used handball in the term; however, it was hard to be critical as they struggled to find an avenue to goal through the Bombers' experienced defence. Dromana had laboured strenuously without just reward in the second quarter but 'held the line' in the face of stern opposition. As the scoreboard indicated, the Tigers had clawed their way back to lead by two points at the 'big break'.

HALF TIME SCORE: DROMANA 3.9 (27) - FRANKSTON 3.7(25)

THE THIRD QUARTER

The third quarter is often referred to as the 'premiership quarter' in football; and history shows that there is some truth in the idiom. From the bounce, Frankston appeared energized and made repeated entries into their 50 metre arc. The Bombers attacked on three occasions, via the outer wing, only to be repelled by Dean Waugh. Dean not only won the ball in style but his delivery to teammates down field was 'centimetre perfect.'

While frequent scrums/scrimmages and stoppages made for slogging football, they were a measure of the desperation of all players in not conceding ground. Yardage matters in tight situations and, at times, the match lapsed into a 'rolling maul'; and it was hard for either side to break the shackles.

Dan Marchesani , one of the most exciting footballers to watch when he switches on the 'after burners'; broke loose and his pass and found Jordy Andrews for the Tiger's fifth goal.

Jody's major gave Dromana a handy buffer of 10 points. Despite the clearance count favouring Dromana at that stage of the game; it is fair to suggest that disposal efficiency was probably in Frankston's favour.

Young Jayden Tooth deserved praise for his gritty performance in defence; and in the third term, he stalled two threatening Bomber raids. Jayden was another Tiger rookie who was performing well on the big stage of finals football.



Dan Marchesani is and arguably the most powerful runner in MPNFL ranks. In 2022, Dan took his football to new levels; and was one of Dromana's best players in the final.

Dan Marchesani came under notice again when he laid a bone-crushing tackle at a tipping point; and young Jack Slattery was gallant in his attempts to deny the Bombers freedom to run. Jay Hutchinson was testing his 'patched up' and 'battle weary' body to the limit. Dromana fought 'tooth and nail' for territory; and young Nick Collier's caught the eye of observers with his high work rate and selfless running.



Jordy Andrews was in the thick of things in attack and worked overtime to lift the Tigers. Jordy impressed supporters with his endeavour across four tough quarters that day.

Football is a 'tidal game' and never more so than in the third quarter as the ball ricocheted between the half back lines. Frankston edged closer following a conversion from a 'sitter' from point blank range (as a result of a 50 metre penalty); and, as the bruising affair unfolded, the match became a 'war of attrition'.

When the siren sounded to end the third term, the Tigers were in front by two meagre points; and the question being asked by all fans: Was it enough to carry the day? The match was balanced on a knife edge; and the Tigers, without Billy Quigley's steady hand, would have to dig deep to prevail. .

THREE QUARTER TIME SCORES: DROMANA 4.11 (35) -FRANKSTON 4.9 (33)

THE FINAL QUARTER

The scene was set for an epic struggle; and the early breaks would be important in the run to 'the wire.' Frankston reclaimed the lead when Jake Batchelor kicked a long goal within 15 seconds of the centre bounce.

The four point margin gave the Bombers breathing space; and it was a major tipping point in the match. Sometimes, the outcome of 'close encounters' hinge on converting half-chances or simply the fortuitous bounce of the ball.

As the pressure mounted and the Bombers' intensity lifted, the Tiger defenders Zac Muschialli, Ayn Musgrave and Jayden Tooth sensed the shift in momentum and threw themselves into the fray. Sam Geurts, Ned Shannon, Nick Collier, Terry Wheeler and Jai Taylor were desperate to make inroads for the Tigers but their endeavours often went awry.



Nick Collier played with maturity and ran hard both ways to lift the Tigers. He seemed at home on the 'big occasion' and his ball handling was clean and his disposal accurate.

Watching from the boundary line, it appeared as though Frankston had sensed the chance to drive home the advantage; and Khan Haretuku, Jake Batchelor and Jason Kingsbury won crucial possessions forward of the centre.



Ron Barassi once said ...'The mark of a champion is consistency' and Sam Geurts was the very model of such throughout 2022. Ron would concur that Sam is a true local champion.

Jai Taylor's strong run brought applause but hearts sank when Frankston's Jarrod Grant kicked his second goal and gave the Bombers a lead of 10 points. The situation worsened for Dromana when four minutes later he repeated 'the dose.' It was a most decisive goal in the context of the game and one that set the Bombers on the path to ultimate victory.

Jarrod Grant, who had played 95 AFL games (81 with the Western Bulldogs and 14 with Gold Coast Suns), kicked three vital goals that day; and would end the season with a tally of 62 goals. Jarrod was selected at full forward in the MPNFL Division: 1 Team of the Year in 2022.

Jason Kingsbury, who had been a 'thorn' in Dromana's side across four quarters, goaled from a set shot in the time on period; and in turn sealed Dromana's fate. The Bomber's brace of goals had dashed Dromana's hopes of victory.

Despite the situation, not one Dromana player dropped his head; and in the true spirit of sport refused to concede and fought to the 'death knell.' The only real failure in any sporting contest is giving up; and all spectators agreed that the young Dromana team had given its all in a tough contest.

Late goals to Sam Geurts and Jai Taylor were some reward for their fighting efforts but the 'horse had bolted'; and the siren brought the curtain down on the Tigers for 2022. As Andrew Jackson said: *'To the victors belong the spoils...'*



Jai Taylor is seen above kicking Dromana's last goal in the Elimination Final. It was a brilliant conversion but too late to save the Tigers from being defeated by 19 points.

IN CONCLUSION

In the last quarter, Frankston had shown the importance of maintaining composure and applying midfield pressure (which resulted in five match-winning goals). Olympic Park has rarely been a happy hunting for Dromana; and again the Tigers had to grapple with the wide wings and the need to run hard 'both ways.' The midfielders (of both teams) were exhausted by the final siren; and it is fair to say that the Bombers had deserved their hard fought win.

The Tigers played with commendable spirit and had done most things right except kick accurately when it mattered most. The scoreboard told the story; and Dromana's inability to convert in the first quarter cannot be overlooked in any match post-mortem.

The hackneyed phrase: 'Good kicking is good football' remains as true today as it did in the days of Roy Cazaly and Dave McNamara. It is difficult to win football matches with a conversion rate of just 31%; and while Frankston's (40%) wasn't much better, their five goal haul in the last term, in a low scoring affair, was the critical difference.

THE MATCH DETAILS

FRANKSTON 2.2 3.7 4.9 9.14 (68)

DROMANA : 1.6 3.9 4.11 6.13 (49)

Goal kickers for Dromana: J. Andrews 2 Geurts 2 J. Taylor N. Collier

Best players for Dromana: S. Geurts B. Geurts J. Andrews D. Marchesani Z.

Muschialli D. Geurts



'All over' for the Tigers for the 2022 season. Dromana's lion-hearted midfielder, Sam Geurts, is seen congratulating Frankston's Jake Greely at the end of an exhausting contest. In a game that was spirited but never spiteful, Frankston 'took the points' and won its way into the 1st Semi-Final against Mt Eliza. On the other hand, for Dromana it was a case of 'so close but yet so far'; and the Tigers exited from the finals race.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

This is mainly for younger readers; and it is hoped to show that in most football clubs (except those made defunct by cessation) can live to 'fight another day'. In 1962, Geelong suffered a dreadful loss in the Semi Final against Essendon when, without its star spearhead, Doug Wade, the Cats kicked 7 goals 17 behinds (i.e. a conversion rate of just 29%) to lose by 52 points.

Geelong did not make the Grand Final that season. However, the following year (i.e. 1963), Geelong won the premiership (against Hawthorn) by kicking 15 goals 19 behinds (44% conversion rate).

The point of this slice of AFL history is simply... that each new season brings a chance of redemption and, with dedicated commitment and practice, teams can rebound and succeed.

THE 2022 UNDER: 19 ELIMINATION FINAL

On the same day and at the same venue, the DFNC Thirds met Frankston in the Elimination Final. The team as selected was:

BACKS	H.COOK	C. WALLACE	K. CAMERON
H BACKS	S.MCGENNISKIN	L.AQUILINA	R.DAVIS
CENTRES	M.HENDERSON	C.TIERNEY	J.CLEMIE
H FORWARDS	J.WILSON	T.DENNIS	C.MEYER-BEARE
FORWARDS	C.RAYMOND	J.SMITH	N.GUNERATNE
RUCKS	B.SWEETNAM	T.MACDONALD	P.BROWN
I/C	M.CHAMBERLAIN K.HOLMES B. RATTANATHIWAT A.XUEREB		

In a close and hard fought contest, Frankston clung on desperately in the closing minutes of the match to claim victory by 5 points. The final score was: Frankston 6.8 (44) defeated Dromana 6.3 (39)

Dromana's goal kickers: Tate Dennis 2, Mackenzie Henderson 1, Josh Smith Corey Beare-Meyer and Coen Raymond.

Dromana's best players: Callum Tierney, Kurtis Cameron, Connor Wallace, Riley Davis, Tate Dennis and Brodie Sweetnam.

Note: Comments and photographs from the game can be found on the previous article (Reference 2023/7).

ANOTHER PIECE OF THE DFNC JIGSAW IS DISCOVERED



A 'long lost' press cutting, regarding Wally Guy's first VFL game with North Melbourne in 1934, has been discovered. The extract below shows that Wally lined up in the forward pocket against Essendon at Windy Hill in his first game for the Sninboners

The following small but historic extract was recently unearthed and is in relation to Dromana's champion Wally Guy's first game with North Melbourne in 1934 (against Essendon). The item was tucked away in a corner of 'The Melbourne Herald' (29th June 1934) and has some pertinence to DFNC history.

Wally Guy, who was 23 years of age, must have been thrilled to be part of a team which included so many stars of that era such as: Jim Adamson, Tom Fitzmaurice, Dick Taylor Johnny Lewis, Charlie Gaudion; and a youngster named Jack Wrouth who would become a household name in later years. Essendon's line-up included Keith Forbes, Clarrie Hearn, Hugh Torney and the champion from Windy Hill, Dick Reynolds.

Essendon won the game by 87 points. Wally kicked one goal for the Shinboners (as NMFC was known until the 1950's). The final scores were: Essendon 29. 16 (190) defeated North Melbourne 15. 13 (103). One of the VFL's most gifted rovers, Keith Forbes booted eight goals and Ted Freyer kicked seven for Essendon that day.

ESSENDON. — Backs: Wallace, Fay, Turner. Half-backs: Bell, Anderson, Lowenthal. Centres: Earle, Griggs, Clarke. Half-forwards: Reynolds, Hearn, Hiskins. Forwards: Milne, Torney, Freyer. Followers: Nash, Webster. Rover: Forbes. 19th man: O'Brien.
NORTH MELBOURNE — Backs: Adamson, Gaudion, Diprose. Half-backs: Huggins, Long, Wells. Centres: Skinner, Taylor, Carter. Half-forwards: Wrouth, Llewellyn, Egan. Forwards: Guy, Fitzmaurice, Jerram. Followers: Lewis, Meade. Rover: Gregory. 19th man: Matthews.

The Essendon v North Melbourne team selections for Round: 8 in 1934. Wally Guy was selected in the forward pocket next to the great Tom Fitzmaurice. Jack Wrouth a 'boy wonder' was named at centre half forward for North Melbourne that day.

Wally Guy played eight games that season and kicked 4 goals before stepping away from VFL football. His last game for North Melbourne was against Melbourne at the MCG in Round: 16. Wally played 182 games for Dromana FNC and was named as the coach of the 'Team of the Era' (1945-2015).



REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION

A special note of thanks to Gayle and Brian Coltery for their generous help with aspects of the above match review. Thank you.

Sources: Personal notes and match summary /statistics and MPNFL files.

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