

# 90 YEARS AGO- 1933 DROMANA PLUMMETS BACK TO EARTH

(Reference 2023/17)



## SEASON 1933—FOOTBALL DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

### INTRODUCTION

While Dromana broke through to claim its first premiership flag in 1931, within two seasons the club had plummeted back to earth and was languishing at the bottom of Peninsula District Football Ladder. However, with the Great Depression impacting in all spheres of Australian society, football was not the major topic among friends and families as ‘bread and butter’ issues dominated most conversations.

The early 1930’s were tough times; and by 1933 the national unemployment rate had reached 30%....

*“At the end of the 1920’s the country fell on hard times. Export prices collapsed, the balance of payments swung into the red , overseas loans were refused , domestic sales fell and businesses went broke...By the early 1930’s a quarter of the workforce was unemployed....the rigours of the depression touched football and footballers.... Source: ‘100 Years of Australian Football.’*

Life was grim and the economic downturn hit hard in many ways. Community organizations and sporting clubs found ‘the going’ difficult ; and within two seasons, Dromana Football Club, which had claimed the pennant in 1931, languished at the bottom of the PDFA Ladder. Langwarrin FC (formed circa 1920), which had tasted success in 1930, also faced daunting challenges in terms of hitting the ‘winners’ board’ that season.

**Note:** Sometime after the 1931 season, Dromana lost the services of two of its brightest stars in Wally Guy (Carrum) and Peter Gleeson (possibly at Hawthorn); and the club’s ‘nose-dive’ from the pinnacle of the PDFA in 1931, to becoming a ‘cellar dweller’ in 1933 was nothing short of ‘dramatic.’

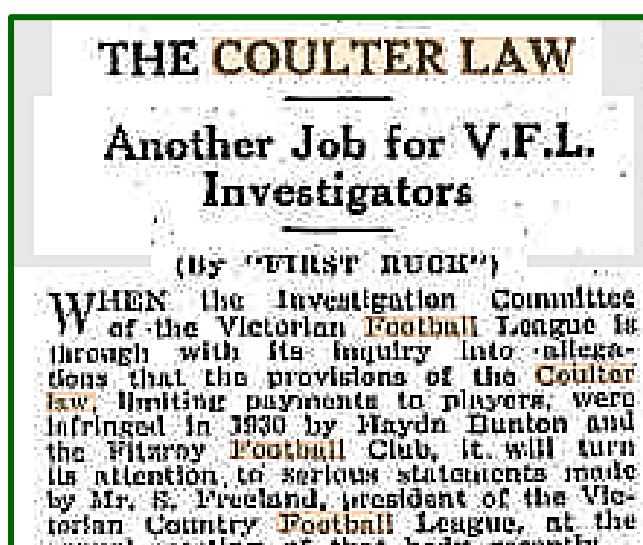


Times were hard for many families in the 1930's; and this photograph shows volunteers collecting for charity at a VFL match. In those days, a blanket or sheet was taken around the boundary (often at half time) and people would 'toss in a coin' to assist the needy/unemployed as shown above (in this case, at Richmond).

## PAYMENT OF LOCAL PLAYERS

While the discussion of player payments at VFL level (e.g. the Coulter Law-see below) was a central issue in 1933, there is no evidence that any footballers at Dromana FC were paid. If such was the case, then it was a well-kept secret; and perhaps any 'incentive to play' was in 'kind' rather than 'hard cash.' It is generally thought that the footballers of DFC were amateurs and played for the 'love of the jumper and the game.'

**Note:** While the VFL's legendary coach and champion forward Norm Smith played with Melbourne in 1934 for no financial reward, the 'general' pay rate for VFL players, in that era, was approximately £2-£3 (pounds) per game.



The payment of football players has always been contentious in football; and it is known that some champion VFL players were enticed to play in country leagues by big financial offers. For example, the legendary Roy Cazaly (shown on the right) was paid £12.00 (pounds) a week (i.e.-\$ 1100 in today's currency) to coach Minyip FC in 1925. There is no evidence to suggest that Dromana footballers were paid in those early days.

## THE LEAGUE STRUCTURE OF 1933

In 1933, football on the Mornington Peninsula was structured into two distinct and independent leagues:

- Mornington Peninsula Football League: The five clubs affiliated with the MPFL were: Frankston, Mornington, Naval Base, Hastings and Sorrento (Note: The MPFL also had a junior competition consisting of eight teams in 1933).
- Peninsula District Football Association: The competing teams in the PDFA were: Carrum, Flinders, Red Hill, Rosebud, Seaford, Langwarrin and Dromana.

## THE DFC PLAYING LIST OF 1933

It is known that the following players represented DFC in 1933: C. Baldwin, S. McLear, T. Simpson, A. Patterson, W. Dyson and G. McLear, E. W. Peterson (ex-Mornington), I. Cairns, W. Evans, W. Patterson, R. Birch, T. Singleton, L. Wiseman and W. Dryden (ex-Rosebud). There would have been others but any such names were not found when researching this article for DFNC.



**Left: Bill Patterson who won the club's goal kicking in 1933. On the right is Reg Birch who was a well-known identity in local football. Reg played more than 100 games for Dromana and won the club's goal kicking award in 1928.**

## 1933 -THE OPENING ROUND

The 1933 PDFA season got under way on May 6<sup>th</sup>; and was a 12 round 'Home & Away' series with the finals series commencing on the 12<sup>th</sup> August. The opening round was as shown below. Flinders drew the bye on that day.

- Rosebud v Red Hill
- Carrum v Seaford
- Langwarrin v Dromana

Dromana travelled to Langwarrin to 'test the waters'; and although, the results were not published, it is thought that Dromana won that match. However, in the Round: 2 clash, Rosebud 8.11(59) defeated Dromana 5. 6 (36) in convincing style.



## A MATCH REPORT FROM 1933- DROMANA V SEAFORD



Newspaper reports, regarding matches in which Dromana was involved in during 1933, were rare and probably a direct result of DFC not having a regular or nominated scribe or reporter. Some of the larger clubs in the PDFA had their own scribes who prepared match reports and club news for publication in the local newspaper. Seaford FC seems to have been well organized in this regard; and its club reporter 'Onlooker' featured often in the 'Standard' throughout the 1933 season.

This match report was published in the 'Frankston and Somerville Standard' on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1933 and deals with Seaford's victory over Dromana. It is lengthy report and, as will be seen below, 'Onlooker' goes off at a tangent during his description of the last quarter of the game. He/she called the report: 'The Game that Died'

'Onlooker' was very critical of the standard of play; and appears to have tried to 'wax lyrical' about the state of the game; and arguably the quality of the match review suffered. Unfortunately, as there is very little emphasis upon the on-field action; and in several paragraphs 'Onlooker' tried to inject some humour into his summary of the game ( and it is best to let the reader judge his success in that regard).

**Please Note:** I have used italics with a larger font and have broken the extract into four main segments to assist the reader. (Roger 2023).



**'Frankston and Somerville Standard' Saturday 15 July 1933. Page: 6**

### **ROUND: 9 1933 PDFA SEAFORD v DROMANA A Game That Died. (By Onlooker)**

At the previous meeting of these teams, Seaford was the visitors by 9-12 to Dromana's 4-8. Seaford, again last Saturday, at Dromana, proved their superiority. The game lacked sparkle throughout, but to a certain extent was evenly contested.

Owing to the poor kicking of Dromana's forwards, and the accurate shooting for goal by the Seaford men, the result of the match was never in doubt at any stage. For some unexplained reason, the appointed field umpire did not arrive; an emergency taking his place.

Excepting for a very strict interpretation of the 'holding the ball' rule, which puzzled the players of both sides, the umpiring was good. From the beginning Seaford rushed the play and quickly had a score of 3 goals to nil. For a long time there was no alteration in the score with the ball just drifting in a lifeless manner from one end of the ground to the other.

Dromana livened up towards the end of the quarter, however, and managed to put on 2-2 without Seaford adding to their score. With neither side putting much heart into the game, the end of the quarter came, with, the scores:

**Quarter time score: Seaford 3-0, Dromana 2-2.**

The second quarter was almost a repetition of the first. Seaford scored another 3 goals rapidly, and rested. Their goals seemed to come easily, whereas Dromana had to battle hard for minor points.

The only incidents that kept the spectators awake in this term, were some brilliant play by C. Baldwin (Dromana), and S. McLearn, also of Dromana, hitting the post three times out of four shots for goal. W. and E. Dryden were outstanding for Seaford in this quarter. Dromana were attacking half-heartedly and kicking erratically when the bell rang.

**Half time score: Seaford 6-1; Dromana 2-6.**

It was hoped that after the interval, some spirit would be infused in to the game, but it was remarkable how similar each quarter was. Seaford were scoring goals in a series of threes, early in each term, and then resting, leaving the impression that they could forge further ahead if serious danger threatened.

On the other hand, Dromana were working hard, with very little result, and were, most of the time, a trifle unlucky... from 11 shots Seaford had scored 9-2.

Dromana with 13 possibilities had scored 2-11. The play had been ranging round about the centre for quite a long time before the bell rang ending a very dull quarter.

**Three-quarter time score: Seaford 9-2- Dromana 2-11.**

The game, which was slowly dying in the previous quarters, expired in the final term. Spectators removed their hats and stood in silence, with bowed heads. Gloomy officials conversed in whispers.

Now and again the officiating clergyman would blow a subdued note on his whistle, and indicate in dumb show, his wishes, which mourners on the field carried out slowly and sadly. One man in an isolated position on the field, with his head buried in his hands, was trembling with emotion or cold. His start shocked surprise as the ball came suddenly towards him showed plainly that his thoughts were far, far away from his present environment.

A discordant note was struck when a man appeared on the scene, looking as if he had just left an enjoyable wake. He glanced gravely around for a while, swaying to and fro. Then, swaying a little too much overbalanced, and falling, went to sleep, where he fell.

The time dragged slowly on and just as the spectators was on the point of breaking down altogether, the final bell tolled mournfully. The men tiptoed silently from the arena, and presently, faint cheers were chanted from dressing rooms. A notice board, showing figures that might have represented burial times in a country church yard, read: **Seaford 9-5, Dromana 3-15.** Those who were conspicuous at the obsequies were, **for Seaford:** W. Dryden, W. Staff, H. Robinson, E. Dryden, P. Heron, A. Weatherly, S. Heron and E. Atkins.

**For Dromana:** C. Baldwin (affectionately known as 'Baldy'), S. McLear, T. Simpson, A. Patterson, W. Dyson and G. McLear.

## NOTES ON THE 1933 SEASON

<b>P.D.F.A.</b>				
The following are the results of last Saturday's matches:—				
Red Hill 11—13, d. Seaford 1—7.				
Rosebud 9—8, d. Carrum 7—16.				
Flinders 22—20, d. Dromana 5—4.				
Langwarrin, a bye.				
<b>PREMIERSHIP LIST</b>				
	P.	W.	L.	Pts.
Carrum . . . . .	12	10	2	40
Flinders . . . . .	12	9	3	36
Rosebud . . . . .	12	8	4	32
Red Hill . . . . .	12	7	5	28
Seaford . . . . .	12	6	6	24
Dromana . . . . .	12	2	10	8
Langwarrin . . . . .	12	0	12	0

1. Things went from bad to worse for DFC during 1933; and in the last match of the season, Flinders 22. 20 (152) overwhelmed Dromana 5.4 (34); and secured a place in the Final Four along with Red Hill, Carrum and Rosebud. Seaford narrowly missed the finals as shown above.
2. Rosebud, which had joined the PDFA in 1929, had fought its way through to the finals in 1932 but 'fell in the straight' to Carrum. However, in 1933, the 'Buds turned tables and claimed the premiership in a strong display. The final scores in the 1933 PDFA Final were: Rosebud 8.12 (60) defeated Carrum 5.10 (40).
3. As mentioned above, Wally Guy was playing with Carrum that season and he kicked two of his team's five goals that day. The following season (i.e. 1934), Wally made his VFL debut for North Melbourne against Essendon in Round: 8 at Windy Hill.
4. Readers may recognise some of these local sporting family names from the Rosebud team of 1933: Simpson, Jensen, Anderson, Brady, Jennings, Patching, Freeman, Hancock, Menzel, Peters, Burnham, Lacco, Wong, Liversidge and Dunk. The MPNFL flag was won by Sorrento in 1933. Sorrento 7.17 (59) defeated Navy 4.21 ( 45).
5. The 1933 PDFA Grand Final was played at Dromana which was a feather in the club's cap and a tick of approval from the PDFA regarding the (i) conditions of the playing surface and (ii) facilities.

**CARRUM DEFEATED IN GRAND  
FINAL**

—

**Meritorious Win for Rosebud**

—

**Peninsula Congratulates**

—

It was indeed highly gratifying to see the Rosebud football team, full of that exhilaration which accompanies the winning of a first premiership, and amid the plaudits of the large crowd assembled at Dromana for this end of season match, leaving the ground after a well-merited victory over Carrum in the District Association grand final last Saturday.

Source: 'Frankston and Somerville Standard' September 9<sup>th</sup> 1933. Page: 6

**Today (Saturday), Mornington will meet Sorrento in the final. This should result in a thrilling struggle, and Mornington will have to go their hardest to win.**

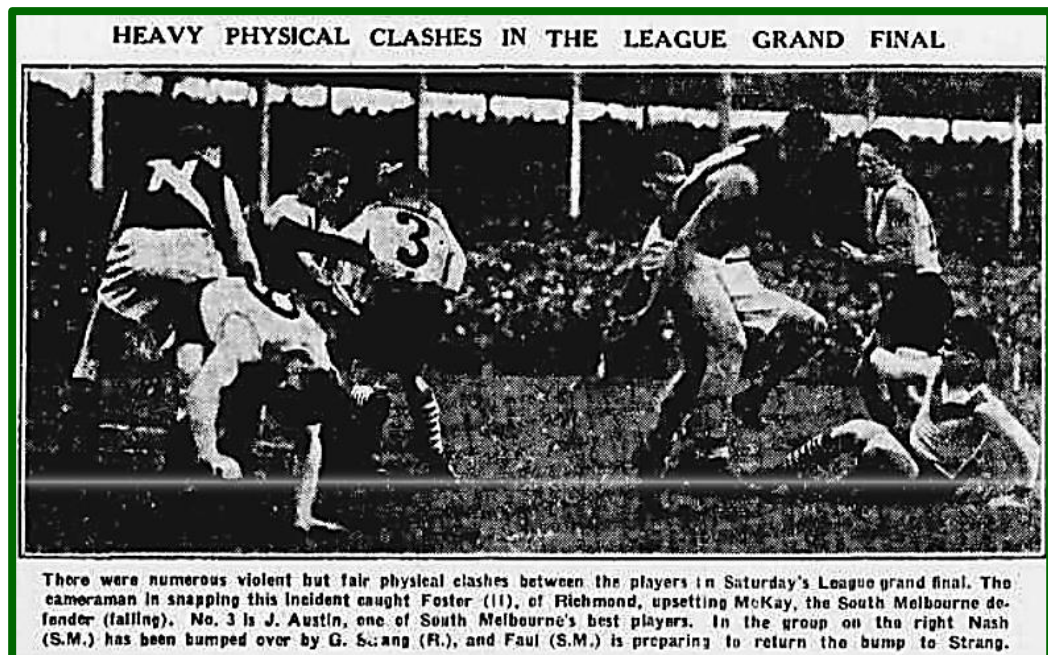
**Rosebud team won the Peninsula District Association premiership from Carrum on the Dromana ground. Scores were: Rosebud, 7.15; Carrum, 5.10.**

Source: 'Weekly Times' September 9<sup>th</sup> 1933. Page: 67



6. Highlights of the VFL season in 1933 included:

- Wilfred 'Chicken' Smallhorn won the Brownlow Medal and Bill Lowenthal from Essendon was the runner up in the prestigious award.
- Bob Pratt kicked 109 goals to win the VFL goal kicking award.
- In August 1933, the 7<sup>th</sup> ANFC Carnival was held in Sydney; and the powerful Victorian combination won all five games.
- Two legends of Australian football made their VFL debuts in 1933 - Laurie Nash (South Melbourne) and Dick Reynolds of Essendon. Younger readers may be unaware that Dick went on to win three Brownlow Medals in 1943, 1937 and in 1938.
- Essendon FC hit the news in 1933 when a siren was used by the timekeepers for the first time (up until then, bells had been used).
- One of the VFL promotions of the game in 1933 was the venture by Melbourne FC to Leeton in NSW to play a match against a combine from the Riverina district.
- South Melbourne, which was branded as the 'Foreign Legion', won the 1933 VFL premiership by 42 points. South Melbourne: 9.17 (71) defeated Richmond: 4.5 (29) in front of a record crowd of more than 75,700 at the MCG. A scene from the physical encounter in 1933 is shown below...



Source: 'The Melbourne Age' September 1933.

## 1934 - THE REFORMATION OF PENINSULA FOOTBALL

While Dromana's uninspiring performances in 1933 were disappointing, the lively discussions, regarding a possible new structure for Mornington Peninsula football, caught the imagination of local fans. As history shows, serious deliberations regarding an amalgamation of the two Peninsula leagues (MPFL and PDFA) were well underway; and by March 1934 five main proposals were tabled for debate...



(1) That the facts concerning the attempts to bring about amalgamation of the two controlling bodies be published as soon as possible.

(2) That the Peninsula District Football Association be informed officially that, if any agreement exists between the P.D.F.A. and M.P.F.L. concerning the recognition of clearances, such agreement is now terminated.

(3) That invitations be sent to Rosebud, Red Hill, Flinders and Dromana clubs to affiliate with the M.P. FL. and that those clubs be informed of the termination of the agreement.

(4) That delegates of Rosebud, Red Hill, and Flinders and Dromana clubs be invited to attend the next meeting of the M.P.F.L. and discuss the grading of teams in the competitions for the coming season.

(5) That applications for affiliation in the M.P.F.L. for the coming season close on April 12. Source: 'Frankston and Somerville Standard' March 24<sup>th</sup> 1934. Page: 6

As a consequence, all local clubs began to consider revamping football; and it would have been nice to have been a 'fly on the wall' at the DFC committee meetings to hear the 'cut and thrust' of those discussions.

By April 21<sup>st</sup>, the amalgamation of the MPFL and PDFA had become a possibility; and, with the VCFL fully supporting the proposal, things moved quickly and on 28<sup>th</sup> April, the 'Standard' carried the following headline...!

**FOOTBALL MERGER**  
**Association and League Disband and**  
**Amalgamate**  
**Nineteen Clubs in Three Grades**

Source: 'Frankston and Somerville Standard' Apr 28<sup>th</sup> 1934. Page: 6

The unification of the two leagues was exciting news and the idea created a degree of anticipation and wide interest; and the Melbourne 'Argus' published an extensive article about the 'new look' league...

**NEW LEAGUE FORMED**  
**On Mornington Peninsula**

Source: 'The Argus' April 25<sup>th</sup> 1934. Page 14

### **NEW LEAGUE FORMED ON MORNINGTON PENINSULA**

**FRANKSTON Tuesday** - Delegates of all football clubs on the Mornington Peninsula except Carrum met in conference last night to discuss a proposal for the amalgamation of the controlling bodies in the district.

*The conference agreed that it was desirable to place the control in the hands of one body. Delegates of each body then met and passed resolutions dissolving the Mornington Peninsula Football League and the Peninsula District Football Association.*

*A new league was then formed. It will be known as the Mornington Peninsula Football League. It will control 16 clubs and 19 teams and will conduct three competitions. The affiliated teams are:-*

- **A Grade:** Frankston, Mornington, Somerville, Sorrento, Hastings and Naval Depot.
- **B Grade:** Red Hill, Rosebud, **Dromana**, Seaford, Hastings. Seconds, Flinders, Tyabb and Crib Point.
- **C Grade:** Langwarrin, Moorooduc, Pearcedale, Frankston Seconds and Sorrento Seconds.

*Office bearers are: President: Mr J A Gloury; vice-presidents, Messrs: M Peters, **G Osborne** and W S Stringer; Treasurer Mr H B Sharpe; Secretary Mr C F Jewell.*

*The first matches will be played on May 5. The new league will affiliate with the VCFL.*

George Osborne (see the photograph below), who had given so much time and energy to Dromana FC and the operations of the PDFA, was elected as a vice president of the Mornington Peninsula Football League. George would play a vital role in seeing that the new league burgeoned and went from 'strength to strength.'

It was proposed that the B Grade competition would commence on May 5<sup>th</sup> ; and, as shown below, Dromana 'met the neighbours' ( Red Hill ) in Round : 1; and the club's first **home** game, for the 1934 season was against Seaford. By May 5<sup>th</sup> 1934, The Mornington Peninsula FL was 'up and running' and a new chapter in the story of Dromana Football Club was about to be written.

**"B" GRADE.**  
**MAY 5.**  
Rosebud v. Tyabb.  
Red Hill v. Dromana.  
Hastings v. Crib Point.  
Seaford v Flinders.  
**MAY 12.**  
Tyabb v. Red Hill.  
Dromana v. Seaford.  
Crib Point v. Rosebud.  
Flinders v. Hastings.



Shown on the left: The first two games of the 1934 season for the newly formed MPFL 'B Grade' competition; and on the right, Dromana's tireless administrator, George Osborne, who was an office bearer of the league in 1934.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The National Library of Australia for allowing access to the early copies of the 'Frankston and Somerville Standard. The 'Standard' was published between 1921 and 1939; and is a most valuable resource in researching the history of the Dromana Football Club in that period.
2. Thanks to Anthony Matthews (a Life member at both Dromana and Rosebud clubs ) for his assistance with the list of Rosebud players for the 1933 season.

## REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION

Sources: National Library of Australia-'The Frankston & Somerville Standard'-DFNC records-personal files-Anthony Matthews (Rosebud FC)-Text: 'Up Where Cazaly?'

Article reference: '90 Years Ago'-1933 v Seaford. Reference 2023/17

Researched and written for DFNC by: Roger Spaul-July 2023

DFNC website administrator: Graham Stelling-Life Member DFNC

Email contacts: [historian@dromanatigers.com.au](mailto:historian@dromanatigers.com.au) or [website@dromanatigers.com.au](mailto:website@dromanatigers.com.au)

