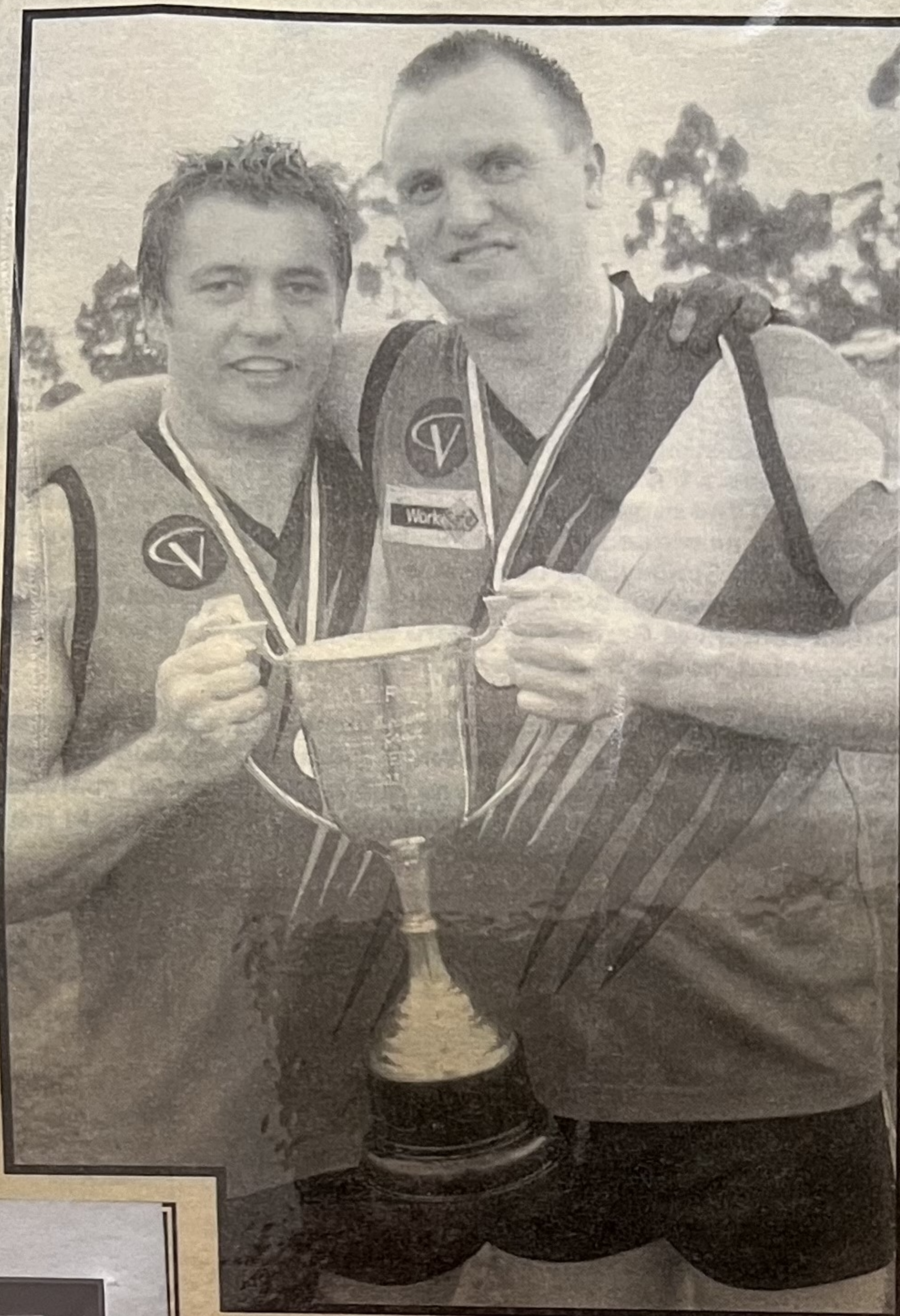


JC and Ash talk the premiership talk

After succumbing to a hamstring injury during the second semi-final former Warragul captain-coach Justin Cant was a doubtful starter in the grand final. Cant scraped through a fitness test on the eve of the game and was doubly keen to play this week not just because it was a grand final but also because he was due to chalk up his 100th game for the Gulls. Cant proved the selectors' faith in him right by playing a major role in holding the Warragul defence together. Cant started his senior career at Warragul in 1990 and played until 1994 before stints at Trafalgar and Korumburra and a return to Warragul in 1999.



Winning Warragul team-mates Justin Cant and Ash Green with the premiership cup.

Ash Green, who played his early football at Warragul before a 23-game stint at the Brisbane Lions during 1991 and 1992, was relieved to guide his beloved Gulls to the ultimate prize.

For Green it's been the second time he has coached a senior side to a premiership, after overseeing Pakenham in 2000.

KM: You captain-coached Pakenham to victory in 2000 but today's victory must be high on the satisfaction list.

AG: It is equally as satisfying, if not more, because of my attachment to the town of Warragul. I've always wanted to come back and play in a premiership with the Warragul footy club and today we got there so I am very satisfied.

KM: Was a turning point in Warragul's season when you were absolutely flogged by Garfield on Queen's Birthday weekend?

AG: Yes there was a lot of soul-searching done then and it was a bit of a reality check. It just came back to work ethic and the guys just had to work harder on the track and we helped each other through it all. We had a great bunch of guys and I always knew they would work through it.

KM: You were beaten in the second semi - what changes did you make to instigate the turnaround?

AG: We brought back a couple of the injured blokes that didn't play, took a little bit of a punt. We tried a few different things

and had a decent crack and it all worked well.

KM: What factors do you put down the grand final win to?

AG: I just think it was due to our endeavour. The guys just had a commitment at the start of the game to give it everything. It sounds funny to say this in a grand final, but I think it was the best effort we put in all year and we had a committed effort for four quarters. We have been labelled as soft a few times but we are certainly not a soft side and we showed it today.

KM: Recruiting-wise, Warragul did well to top up on last year?

AG: We just tried to promote local players. We could go buy players, but that's not right, we are not about that.

KM: You must have learnt something from last year's grand final?

AG: We learnt from the despair of last year and, when you have many 17- and 18-year-old kids compared to a veteran like Gary Olsson, they have to learn from their first experience.

GRAND FINAL PLAYER RATINGS

Western Division grand final teams as they lined up

GARFIELD

BP - Brent McFarlane. Sound game. 4
 FB - Ryan McKenna. Effected some good spoils but struggled with Whelans' fast leads. 5
 BP - Nick Marsh. Always in the thick of the action. 7
 HBF - Jake Hower. Good first half. 5
 CHB - Ben Soumilas. Assured display. Warragul tried hard to avoid the central defender. 5
 HBF - Justin Pickering. Tried hard but with little impact. 4
 W - Nick Pumphrey. Used his pace well. 6
 C - Lincoln Withers. Won plenty of possessions. 6
 W - Andy Soumilas. Burrowed in and tried his hardest to generate forward thrusts. 7
 HFF - Joe Allen. Started well but faded. 5
 CHF - Dan O'Hara. Put his body in well. 5
 HFF - Jack Allen. Only popped up in the second quarter. 3
 FP - Gavin Upton. Quiet game by his standards. 3
 FF - Mal McKenna. One kick, one mark, one goal. 2
 FP - Shaun Pickering. Made the most of his opportunities. 6
 R - Jason Nibbs. Good start but faded. 5
 RR - Ben Marsh. Persevered strongly all day. 6
 R - Danny O'Brien. Flashes of brilliance. 5
 I/C - Matt Cunningham. Lively second term but minimal impact. 3
 I/C - Tom Marsh. Made his name tell to nullify Pitt. 5
 I/C - H3. Little impact off the

WARRAGUL

BP - Peter McKenna. Aggressive approach on the ball. 6
 FB - Grant Aitken. Tight disciplined effort for the entire game. 7
 BP - Justin Cant. At his tough uncompromising best. 7
 HBF - Rob Murphy. Revelled in the conditions. 7
 CHB - Ash Green. Brick wall in defence. 8
 HBF - Nick Humphrey. Showed poise. 6
 W - Brad Nott. Busy and accounted well for his opponent. 6
 C - Dan Murphy. One of the chief playmakers. 7
 W - Leigh Baldry. Provided a springboard into attack. 6
 HFF - Tim Brady. Used the ball effectively. 6
 CHF - Glen Marshall. Struggled to lose his tagger. 4
 HFF - Des Barr. Steady game. 5
 FP - Simon Byrne. Viable forward option early. 5
 FF - Paul Whelan. Strong marking focal point. 7
 FP - Gary Olsson. At his bustling mobile best. 6
 R - Steven Pitt. Acquitted himself well. 6
 RR - Nick Edney. Good hard constant running through out all game. 7
 R - Paul Mack. The driving force all day. 8
 I/C - Xavier Gargan. Struggled to make an impact and injured in third term. 3
 I/C - Tim Keily. Used sparingly off bench. 3
 I/C - Brendan Sheehan. Handy possessions in the last term. 3

KM: It was a fantastic victory today, Justin.

JC: Yes it was! We had our backs against the wall but we came through.

KM: You have been with this club when they endured difficult times. That must make this victory more enjoyable.

JC: Yes it was difficult early, but we were happy to come to West Gippsland and we have enjoyed the success in the new league and the success today.

KM: You have been carrying a hamstring for a few weeks. How close were you to not playing?

JC: Well, the last few weeks have been hard work just trying to get right. I had a test yesterday afternoon and came up trumps.

KM: What do you put the revival between the second semi-final and the grand final down to?

JC: We put it down to the bye. We never play well after a bye. Many people doubted us, but we never had any doubt in our own ability. We are a physical side as well and we made that statement today and it was as simple as that.

KM: There was a school of thought that the wet conditions may not favour Warragul.

JC: Everybody outside of Warragul felt that, but inside of our club the likes of Ash, myself, Steve Carey (assistant coach) and Flacky all thought it wasn't an issue.