

West Gippsland PRELIMINARY FINALS

HAWKS' SPOT IN RESERVES

Drouin Reserves have thrived on the "underdog" tag during the finals series and no more so than on Sunday when it brushed ROC aside 11-7 to 6-11 in the preliminary final.

It was the first time in a decade that Drouin had won a reserves' encounter against ROC and opens up a chance to give the club its first premierships in the grade since 1991.

However, the Hawks - who have now won three finals games in three weeks - will wear an even bigger underdog label in next Sunday's grand final against Warragul, which has cruised through to the big game of the year without a blemish for the season.

Drouin conceded height in the ruck and in key positions against ROC, but were disciplined to a team plan and had an army of determined players at ground level.

None were better from the opening bounce until the final siren than the Youngman brothers, Paul and Shane.

Shaun Kleeven and Peter Bartlett superbly performed set tasks in defence that stifled a number of usual scoring avenues for ROC, who got the last two goals of the game to reduce the margin to a level - 26 points - that did not reflect Drouin's superiority.

After the first two goals to the Hawks with the breeze, ROC fought back to square the ledger at 2-2 each at quarter time, but Drouin's second quarter when it added three goals to one built the confidence that enabled it to continue on to a good win.

Yet again, captain and ruckman John Ablett conceded height but used his experience to win his

Drouin Reserves were a contented group leaving the ground on Sunday, but any celebrations are on hold for another week.

share of hit outs and also patrolled around the ground to provide passing options for team mates.

"Super veteran" Allan Bethune was the forward focal point, not only finishing with four goals but bringing the ball down to ground level players.

The move of Jeff Walsh into attack after half time provided another capable marking option.

Three of ROC's tall brigade - Adrian Linden, Lee Dowsett and Scott Pitcher - were among its best with Ryan Hamilton and Paul Winterton also prominent.

SENIOR EXPERIENCE HELPS DROUIN 3RDS

After an upset loss in the second semi-final, Drouin thirds were "back to business" in the preliminary final scoring an impressive 42-point win against Cora Lynn on Sunday.

The Hawks had amongst their numbers eight players who've had senior football experience, including two who had been members of Drouin's senior semi-final side just a week earlier.

The senior experience showed when - after a nip and tuck first quarter - Drouin drew away and had the match well in its keeping by three-quarter time.

Final scores were 16-8 to 9-8.

It was another highly entertaining and high standard thirds' final.

The Hawks had plenty of avenues in attack with 9 individual goal kickers headed by ground level players Dale Thomas (four goals from a forward pocket) and rover Trevor Gardiner (three).

But the driving force behind Drouin's win was ruckman Brenton Lockhart, who set the tone for the game with a big forward knock from the opening bounce and made

Drouin 2-2, 5-3, 8-6, 11-7, 73

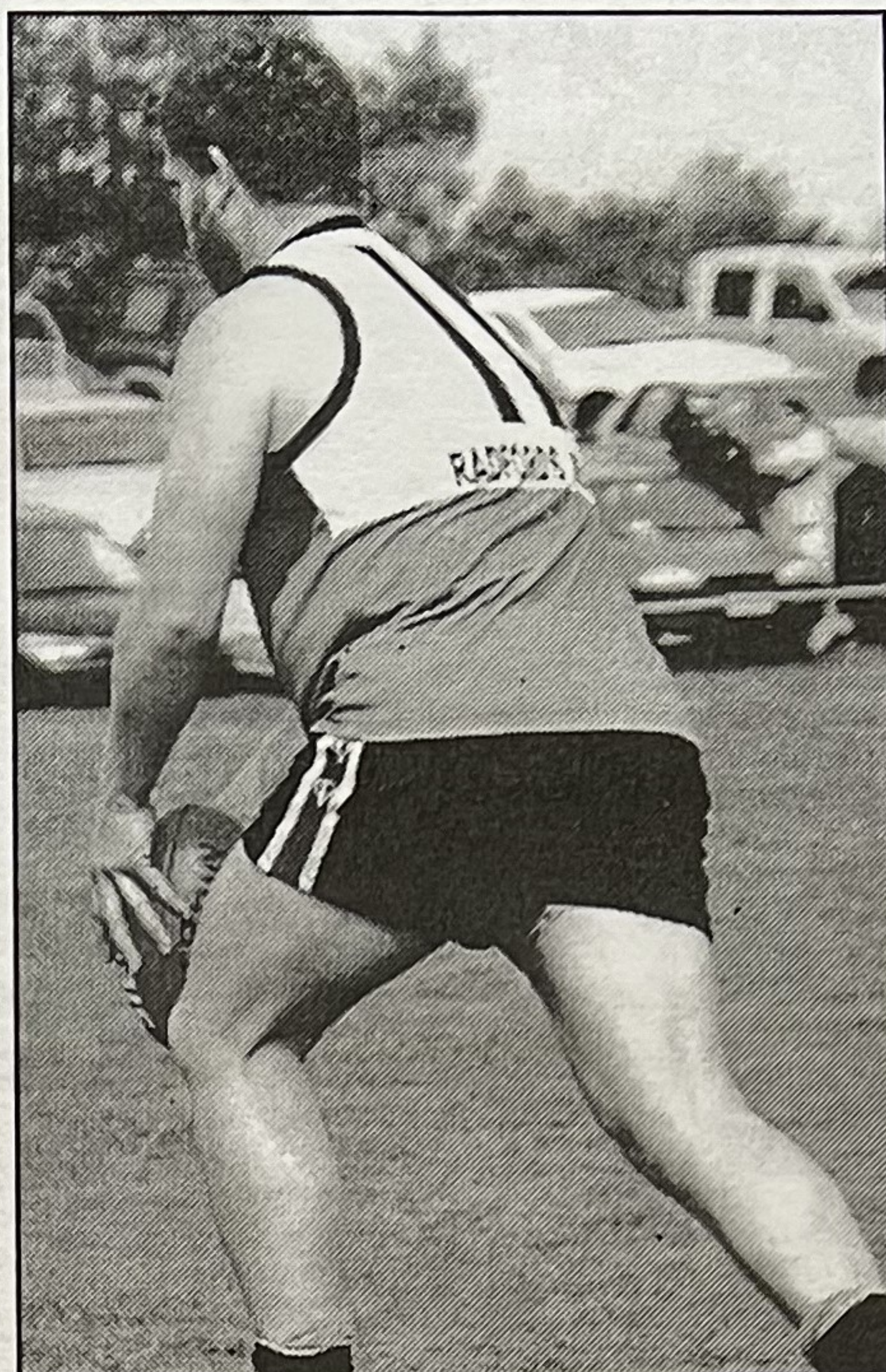
ROC 2-2, 3-6, 3-8, 6-11, 47

Best - Drouin: Shane Youngman, Shaun Kleeven, Paul Youngman, Peter Bartlett, John Ablett, Tim Price.

ROC: Lee Dowsett, Ryan Hamilton, Scott Pitcher, Adrian Linden, Paul Winterton, Murray Robinson.

Goals - Drouin: A.Bethune 4, Clayton Bawden 2, J.Walsh 2, S.Masterson 2, A.Campbell.

ROC: A.Parry 2, S.Pitcher, J.Williams, S.McIntyre, C.Scott.



Paul Whelan heads in for the first of the six goals that took him to his century for the season.

100 to Whelan

Warragul full forward Paul Whelan kicked his 100th goal for the season late in the last quarter of Sunday's preliminary final.

He brought up the last of his six goals for the day and his century total with a trademark good kick into the breeze after a strong mark on a lead.

It was a superb achievement by Whelan who has spent a considerable part of the season on the sidelines because of injury.

He, and his team mates, would have been pleased he got the milestone out of the way before next Sunday's grand final which will see the league's two centurions this year - the other being Garfield full forward Mal McKenna - lining up in the premierships decider.

Whelan was recruited to Warragul this year from Ellinbank District league club, Neerim South, and will be one of the key players in the Gulls' quest for the flag.

Goon 4ths make it

Opening quarter dominance set Nar Nar Goon's under 16 fourths on the way to a grand final berth next weekend.

The Goons were not over awed by their more fancied opponents and ran out well-deserved 5-12 to 2-4 winners in Sunday's preliminary final against Drouin.

Drouin did not give up trying all day but had no counter to the physically stronger and well drilled

unit that denied the Hawks a score until after half time.

After opening up a 3-1 to nil lead in the first term, Nar Nar Goon had chances to put a big gap between the teams in the second quarter but was rewarded with just five behinds.

Drouin clawed its way back to within reach - a 17 point deficit at three-quarter time - but the first goal of the last term to Nar Nar Goon was an effective sealer.

Early start to big day

There'll be an early start to the WGLFL Western Division's big day at Nar Nar Goon next Sunday with the first of the grand finals kicking off at 8.30 a.m., half an hour earlier than usual.

League general manager, Chris Soumilas, said the early start was to ensure plenty of time for presentation of premierships trophies and medallions after each of the games.

Gates will open at 7 a.m.

Four-wheel drive vehicles and vans are not to be parked around the oval fence.

Entry fees for grand final day are \$12 for adults, \$6 for aged pensioners and people 17 years and under are admitted without charge.

No alcohol is allowed to be brought into the venue but liquor booths will be open at the ground.

The grand final matches are:-

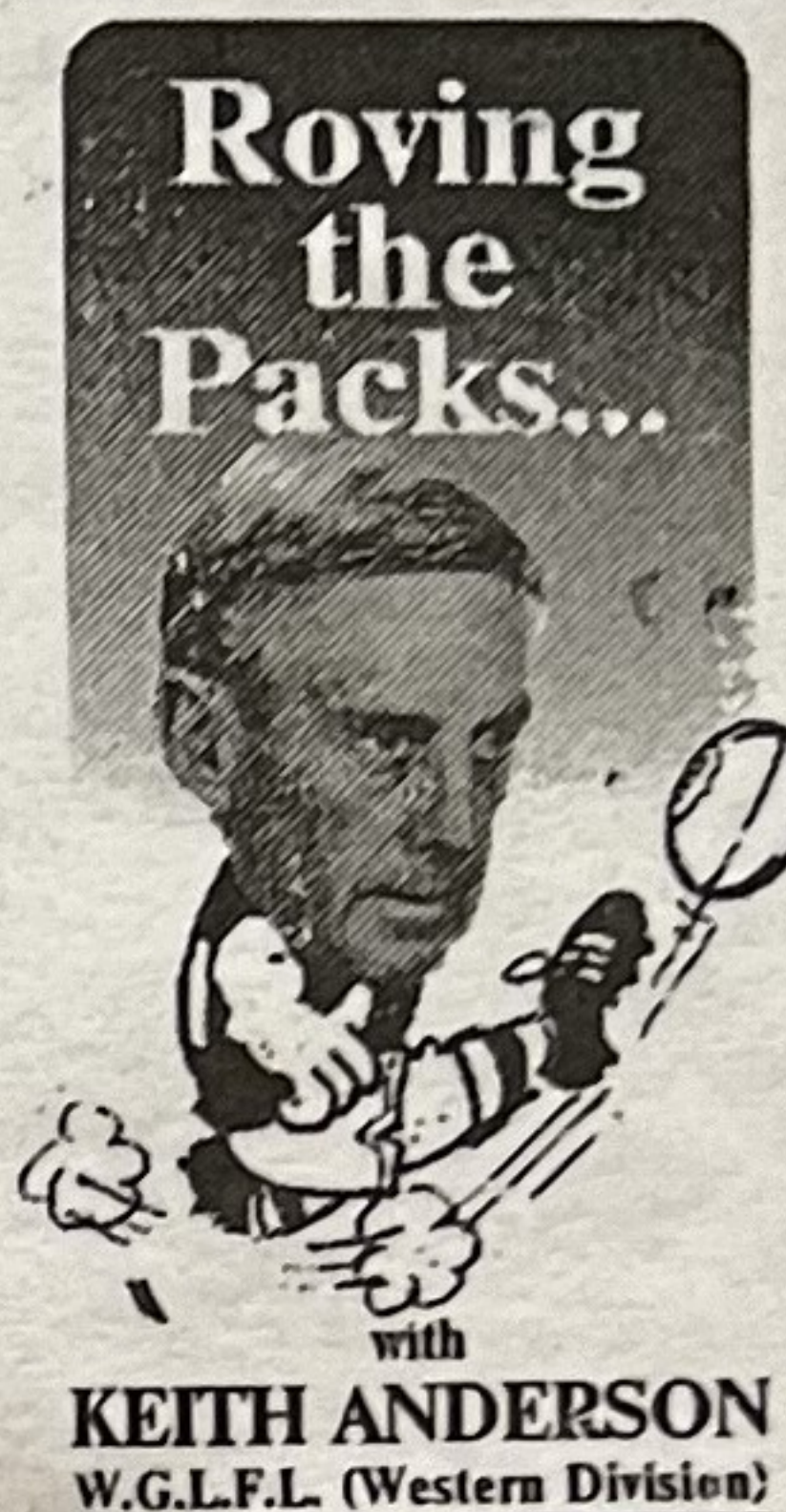
4ths: 8.30 a.m. - Warragul v. Nar Nar Goon.

3rds: 10.30 a.m. - ROC v. Drouin.

Reserves: 12.30 p.m. - Warragul v. Drouin.

SENIORS: 2.30 p.m. - WARRAGUL v. GARFIELD.

First named teams will use the home dressing rooms and wear "home" shorts.



KEITH ANDERSON
W.G.L.F.L. (Western Division)

tle with admission charges this year increased by about 10%.

It was also the first Sunday preliminary final for the league as well as clashing with Fathers' Day and an EDFL final involving Warragul Industrials, some of whose supporters may have been expected to be at Garfield to watch Western Park tenants Warragul in the senior match had the games been on different days.

The Garfield ground was superb on Sunday.

A fortnight ago it hosted the elimination final in conditions that were appallingly bad with gale strength winds and driving rain water-logging the surface.

Players from the fourths through to the seniors all were very complimentary of how the ground was presented on Sunday.

Credit for its rejuvenation in such a short period goes to Garfield club stalwarts Tim Collis and Simon Beard.

Cora Lynn players have won both league best and fairest awards for the junior grades.

Ash Camilleri polled 19 votes to be judged winner of the under 18 thirds Pitt Medal.

Eric Sibosado of Phillip Island was runner-up with 16 votes with Warragul's Adam Jostlear in third place a further vote behind.

In the fourths, the Handley Medal winner was Anthony Guiliano on 23 votes, four ahead of his Cora Lynn team mate Brad Horaczko.

Drouin's Adrian Pilay was third on 18 votes.

Drouin reserves' upset win over ROC on Sunday may have, in part, been aided by the strength of its coaching panel.

As well as the head reserves' coach, Lloyd Burgmann, the off field bench included senior coach, Mick Fogarty, and assistant senior coach, Darren Sidebottom.

At breaks during the match Burgmann spoke to the defenders as a group, Fogarty the forwards and Sidebottom the centerline and on ball players before Burgmann gave the team addresses.

ROC didn't have the same "luxury" with its senior coaching panel concentrating on its match against Warragul.

