

West Gippsland GRAND FINALS

WARRAGUL'S GRAND FINAL
GLORY

Warragul's captain-coach Ashley Green and president, Bob Baldry, were delighted to raise the premiership cup to the cheers of the players and supporters who've been waiting almost 20 years for a Gulls' flag.

The last quarter could not have started better for Warragul.

Withers grabbed the ball in the centre and tried to use his strength to give his side early impetus, but the gang tackling Warragul won a free kick from him and, when the ball was knocked away, the resulting 50-metre penalty put Edney 40 metres out and he kicked superbly.

Edney had been one of Warragul's hard players in and around the packs all day and certainly enhanced his standing as a player throughout the final series.

Garfield's frustration at the Gulls' constant and concentrated pressure started to show and it lost Gavin Upton for 15 minutes after he was sent off - and appeared to have been reported.

Warragul's Xavier Gargan left the ground on a stretcher after colliding with Upton and severely injuring a hamstring.

When Robert Murphy intercepted a Garfield pass and found Whelan, who finally got on target, the match had been sealed.

It was a fitting way for both these players to end the match; they'd been great contributors all day with Murphy chosen by the umpires to be the recipient of the best on the ground medal.

Warragul executed its team plan well under the conditions.

Green led superbly and the Warragul team looks much more solid with him in a key defence position; Baldry, Edney, Brady, Peter McKenna, and the Murphys were among the smaller players that dispelled doubts about Warragul's ability to apply pressure, and "old heads" Flack, Justin Cant and Gary Olsson provided good leadership and strong contests.

Stephen Pitt, although a bit short for a ruckman, was competitive in that role all day - and in all of Warragul's finals in the absence of the injured Paul Wallin - and gave timely support to the defenders.

For Garfield, rover Andy Soumilas was superb but didn't have quite enough helpers.

Withers certainly gave his all but was prevented from providing his accustomed impact, Shaun and Justin Pickering, Ben and Nick Marsh and Pumphrey never easily conceded any ground and were instrumental in many of Garfield's forward moves.

But perhaps the team's, and the club's, most positive point on a disappointing day was the performance of youngster Tom Marsh, who was elevated from the thirds only just before the finals and has shown potential to develop into a top line player with his ruck work and strong marking around the ground.

The scorecard

Warragul 2-2, 4-3, 5-11, 7-13, 55
Garfield 1-1, 2-5, 5-5, 5-6, 36

Best - Warragul: Robert Murphy, Stephen Pitt, Ashley Green, Justin Cant, Nic Edney, Ryan Flack.

Garfield: Andy Soumilas, Ben Marsh, Nick Marsh, Jai Pumphrey, Lincoln Withers.

Goals - Warragul: P.Whelan 4, N.Edney, S.Byrne, T.Brady.

Garfield: S.Pickering 2, M.McKenna, D.O'Brien, Joe Allen.

Best on ground medal: Robert Murphy (Warragul).
Captain/coaches: Ashley Green (Warragul), Ben Soumilas (Garfield).

Umpires: D.Anderson, I.Ballantyne, S.Walker (field); J.Quinn, J.Stratton (boundary); M.Argoon, D.Barnes (goal).

Both line-ups

Warragul

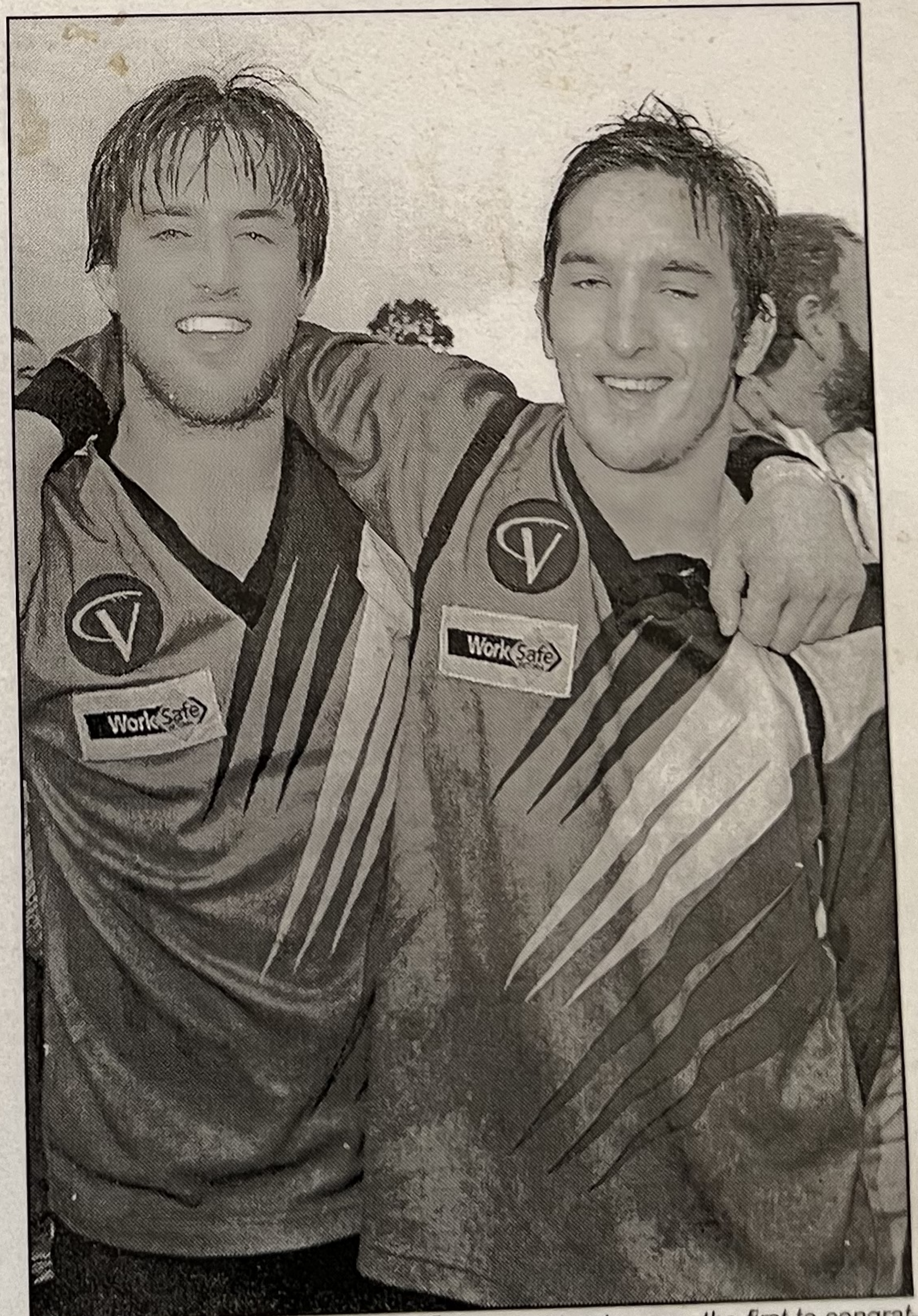
Backs: P.McKenna, G.Aitken, N.Humphrey.
H-backs: J.Cant, Ashley Green, B.Nott.
Centres: R.Murphy, D.Barr, L.Baldry.
H-forwards: N.Edney, G.Olsson, G.Marshall.
Forwards: S.Byrne, P.Whelan, T.Brady.
Ruck/rovers: S.Pitt, D.Murphy, R.Flack.
Interchange: B'Sheehan, T.Keily, X.Gargan.

Garfield

Backs: J.Hower, B.McFarlane, R.McKenna.
H-backs: J.Pickering, B.Soumilas, N.Marsh.
Centres: J.Pumphrey, L.Withers, D.O'Brien.
H-forwards: D.O'Hara, Joe Allen, Jack Allen.
Forwards: G.Upton, M.McKenna, S.Pickering.
Ruck/rovers: J.Nibbs, A.Soumilas, B.Marsh.
Interchange: H.Lacunes, T.Marsh, M.Cunningham.

WGLFL FOOTBALL AND NETBALL
GRAND FINAL PHOTOS BY

TOM ELTON and FRED REEVES



Brothers in arms. Robert (left) and Danny Murphy were the first to congratulate each other after Sunday's win. Shortly after, Robert was named winner of the medal for best player in the match.

Warragul has won the WGLFL Western Division premiership, the club's first senior premiership since 1984, atoning for its grand final loss last year.

Warragul's most recent premierships were in 1994, but it was its fourth grand final loss since then.

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