

ROOSTER REMINISCES

A look back at a memorable match from each round

Round 13

Season 1938 (Saturday 30 July)



*The mercurial Ken Farmer earlier in 1938 (Round 3)
kicking his 1,000th league goal*

The early 1930s was a time of desperation and fear with uncertainty of job security rife throughout the country as The Great Depression arrived. Their relief: sport and entertainment. While the Marx Brothers, W.C. Fields and even Seven Dwarfs were giving them enjoyment on the screen on the sporting fields there were other names that were giving thousands delight and happiness, names that continue to be recalled today: Phar Lap at the races, Sir Don Bradman on the cricket grounds and Ken Farmer in the SANFL. Any significant North match reviewed during the 1930s could be devoid without Farmer mentioned or having a major impact in the match. And while his incredible record is historically linked to SANFL folklore reading the occasional match report can provide a grander scale of Farmer's impact in the games he played. He certainly had bad days (but would still kick two or three goals) but considering he kicked five or more goals in 144 of his 224 games he was constantly a contributor to the team. And in this Round in 1938, he led a great fightback... all on one leg!

The Background

With five rounds remaining for the season North were sitting 5th and a win outside the top four. Matches were becoming critical and North met cellar-dwellers Glenelg who had only won two of their 12 games for the season with one being the previous week. North were coming off an unimpressive win after two losses that put a finals position in doubt. North's chances of winning were increased with **Owen Martin**, the club's prominent backman and **Ken Farmer** returning from injury. Farmer missed the previous game with a torn ligament in his leg (only his second game he had missed in the past 85 games).

The Match

Ken Farmer was clearly not 100% when the teams entered Prospect Oval for their clash. A noticeable limp was evident and would restrict his playing ability. And the team itself was flat early as Glenelg, coming off their previous round victory and using the strong wind they had in their backs – burst out of the gates in a staggering display of long kicking to kick seven goals to nil in the first term to close the quarter a staggering 42-point leader.

The scoreboard showed the first quarter performance: North 0.2, Glenelg 7.2.

The disappointing quarter time score (imagine facing that in North's next game) was hard to fathom however with the breeze still strong North needed to capitalise it to get back into the match. And they did.

The second quarter belonged to North who also took full advantage of the wind. Farmer, despite hobbling, was still able to outplay his opponent and became a force in the second term:

- "North soon swung into a goal-getting move, however, and after **(Fred) Alexander** had hooked one over his shoulder, Farmer put on two more. Both were from delightful long screw punts, perfectly judged under the gusty conditions" - *News*

With **Owen Martin** holding fort at centre-half back and **Jeff Pash** manning the centre the team bombarded their goals to score 10.9 for the term that wrestled the lead back by the main break. Farmer kicked four goals (and a number of behinds) in the term and North was finally in control of the game to lead by 15 points although their domination (and wayward goal-kicking) should have given them a larger buffer.

The second half saw North firstly withstand any Glenelg challenge that was to come with their wind advantage before over-running them in a comprehensive second half. North came away with a comfortable victory despite kicking poorly in front of goal with a 5.11 last quarter. In fact by the last term North were so domineering they were "practically doing as they liked." North's nine-goal winning margin by no means a result expected after the first term. The highlight of the last quarter's dominance was a goal by the bespectacled Mel McInnes who raised two flags from a 70-yard (64m) punt goal.

While it proved a resounding victory it may certainly not have been such a result if the injured Farmer did not take the field. The Captains presence was a confidence-boost for the team and his second quarter was critical in leading the red-and-whites to respond to a terrible first term and large deficit.

The Mail and *The Advertiser* both noted his stature in the game:

- "No finer example of Ken Farmer's enthusiasm for the game could be found than his reappearance with North today. He limped on to the ground, and during the play was handicapped in going for the ball. In the gusty conditions, his kicking was not as accurate as usual, but carried his total for the season to 90 goals. There seems little doubt he will reach 100 goals for the ninth successive season" - *The Mail*;
- "Farmer's reappearance was a remarkable one. Limping badly when he took the field he did not shake off the weakness which is affecting his left leg, but nevertheless grittily carried on, marking and playing strongly throughout" - *The Advertiser*.

Farmer's renowned accuracy was understandably amiss during the afternoon in part due to his leg injury and the windy conditions however he was still proficient enough to register 14 scoring shots to finish with 6.8.

There were other notable contributors to North's victory. *The Mail* was keen to highlight their significance in the match as well:

- "In L. **(Lionel) Bennetts** North Adelaide has a potential interstate player. His rapid rise has been a feature of the North Adelaide team this season. He played a most effective game in ruck on Saturday. **(Gordon) Hogan** added another fine exhibition to his list of good goalkeeping displays and **(Owen) Martin** (whom he has displaced as his full back) and **(Keith) Bowden** played splendidly on the half-back line. A. **(Alan) Burton** also did well there. **(Jeff) Pash** (centre), **(Ray) Farrant** (ruck and forward), **(Mel) McInnes** (mighty punt-kicks with the wind), **(Fred) Alexander** (half-forward), **(Gordon) Power** (half-back), **(Dud) Warhurst** and **(Clarrie) Rix** (roving) were often prominent;"

- “**Mel McInnes**’s powerful kicking was a feature at the Prospect game. In the second term there were general cheers for a mighty goaling shot from the half-forward line, and they were repeated when he did the same thing with the wind behind again in the last quarter;”
- “When (**Owen**) **Martin** reappeared for North today he was stationed at centre half-back. He proved a hard man to pass, but needed a little more pace.”

It wasn’t one of Farmer’s biggest goalkicking feats, nor a victory to saviour against a highly ranked club, but it epitomised the leadership and courage that Ken Farmer is rarely reflected upon. And it was a brilliant comeback from quarter time (the biggest deficit ever) which showcased the miraculous fightback the team produced. Sadly the win was not enough for the team to make the finals, but it did provide some highlights for its supporters on a wet and windy afternoon.

Stats Fact

- North’s 10.9 (69) 2nd quarter tally is their third highest score for this quarter ever and 2nd highest ever at Prospect. It is also North’s highest score for the second quarter ever against Glenelg;
- The 42-point quarter time deficit is the highest margin against North that North have successfully comeback and won;
- North’s 24 behinds for the match and 11 behinds in the 4th quarter are the 4th and 2nd highest efforts against Glenelg respectively;

Round 13 Stats Fact

- North’s score of 20.24 (144) is the 6th highest score they have kicked for this round and the 54-point margin the 10th biggest;
- The 234-point match aggregate is the 7th highest for a North match in this round;
- Glenelg’s 7.2 was North’s highest score against for the first quarter while North’s 10.9 2nd quarter is their best effort for this round;
- North 24 behinds (match) and 11 behinds (4th quarter) is their highest ever kicked in their categories for this round;

Match Details:

North	0.2	10.11	15.13	20.24	144
Glenelg	7.2	9.2	13.6	14.6	90
Ground:	Prospect Oval			Crowd:	2,465

Best Players: Martin, Rix, Hogan, Bennetts, Warhurst, Bowden, Farmer

Scorers: Farmer 6.8, Farrant 3.1, Warhurst 2.4, Rix 2.3, Bennetts 2.2, Alexander 2.1, McInnes 2.1, Oatway 1.1, S. Burton 0.2, rushed 0.1

The Team:

F: Ray Farrant, Ken Farmer, Dudley Warhurst
 HF: Alan Burton, Mel McInnes, Fred Alexander
 C: Cyril Shepherdson, Jeff Pash, Donald West
 HB: Gordon Power, Owen Martin, John Carvosso
 B: Sydney Burton, Gordon Hogan, Keith Bowden
 1R: Lionel Bennetts, Albert Oatway, Clarrie Rix
 Res: Robert Neville



Two of North's best in the comeback victory: Owen Martin and Dudley Warhurst

**David O'Hara
History Committee**