

ROOSTER REMINISCES

A look back at a memorable match from each round

Round 2

Season 1951 (Saturday 28 April)



*Ron Phillips (date unknown) getting prepared for a match.
A young Don Gilbourne is beside him*

Most North Adelaide supporters will look back at the mid-to-late 1980s as a special part in the club's history. Despite only winning one premiership (but featuring in three) it was an enjoyable ride to witness victories both regular and expected incorporated with unbelievable entertaining football, an array of skill and speed and goals galore. For those who can go back over 30 years earlier will remember another remarkable period – though shorter - which provided a more successful outcome when our great goalkicker **Ken Farmer** took the coaching reigns. In 1949, in his first season, he coached North to their first premiership since 1931. Hindsight will show he did the same in his last year as coach in 1952 (in his 4th and final season). For his four-year tenure North would remain a dominant team. Had it not been for a slow start and the loss of some key players in 1950 (resulting in just missing the finals) it proved the catalyst for North returning to finals action in 1951.

Background

North journeyed to Unley Oval for the second round of the 1951 after a comfortable 71-point flogging against South Adelaide in Round One. Sturt, 8th in 1950, failed to get over the line in their contest against West by under a goal. North commenced the match like they did in Round 1 with their great full-back **Ian McKay** again leading the ruck, forming a formidable duo with **Ron Phillips** named as ruck-rover. This was partly to combat Sturt and the SANFL's great player Len Fitzgerald who entered the game as Sturt's first ruck.

The Match

A great crowd and beautiful weather met the teams as they entered the oval but it was evident early that it would be North who would ultimately enjoy the first quarter. Cleaner ball movement, a tighter defence and with **Ian McKay** having the best against Sturt's Len Fitzgerald early resulted in North linking well to break the game open with a 7.5 to 0.3 opening spell. In fact North continued the scoring dominance into the second term kicking the first three goals – thus the first 10 for the match – before Sturt finally registered their first goal 15 minutes into the term. North's forward line was working well in unison, with **Dean Stringer** kicking three goals up to the main break. However leading the goals was ruck-rover **Ron Phillips**, who was in supreme form around the ground as well as kicking four goals in the first half. **Alan Galloway** (centre half-back), **Darcy Cox** (rover) and **Lloyd Weston** (back pocket) were also playing great football.

With 13 goals and a lead of 72 points at the main break it would take concentration and commitment to continue with the form already witnessed and the red-and-whites simply just did that. The second half of the game continued like the first with North outscoring the Double Blues 12.8 to 4.6 to record a whopping 122-point victory. Youngster **Dean Stringer's** afternoon only got better as the day went on by kicking five goals in the second half to finish with a personal record eight goals while the brilliant **Ron Phillips** finished with six goals in a best-on-ground performance.

The Advertiser was clear on how wide the gap was between the two sides:

- “Rarely has a league team been so thoroughly humbled as was Sturt at Unley Oval when North Adelaide won in a walk by 122 points. Against any other team, North Adelaide’s performance would have stamped it as a premierships side, but Saturday’s victory could scarcely be taken as a true indication of the team’s strength. North throughout showed the teamwork and drive which wins premierships, but, on the other hand, Sturt showed a complete lack of understanding, speed and initiative.”

The great Haydn Bunton, writing for *The Mail*, couldn’t hold back his applause for North’s form but also Sturt’s poor performance:

- “I think North will be hard to beat for this year’s premierships... North co-operated well as a team in a consistent display in which they did not show one weak link. North Adelaide definitely had too many strings for Sturt from the first bell, and quickly showed they were by far the better-balanced side.”

In highlighting the better players it was clear who the best player was judging by the media:

- “Best man on the ground was North Adelaide follower **Ron Phillips**, whose position play and unhurried, precise disposal, coupled with his six goals, was a feature of the game. He virtually had the ball on a string, due in part for the brilliant roving of **H. McKenzie** and **Cox**” – *The Advertiser*,
- “**Phillips’** hand-balling in the forward lines gave North many of their scoring opportunities. Showing real Magarey Medal form, his coolness and anticipation soon made him the best man on the ground. For North, **Phillips** was best man on the ground with his outstanding play in four quarters. He topped his performance with six valuable goals, and his position play was outstanding” – Haydn Bunton (*The Mail*).

Other players mentioned in the following day’s reports included:

- “**Dean Stringer’s** 8.3 was a fine effort. His leading was reminiscent of the (**Ken**) **Farmer**, (Bruce) Schultz, (Bo) Morton pre-war era” – *The News*;
- “**W. McKenzie** wasted few opportunities at centre half-forward. **McKay**, **Stringer**... **Griffen**, **Weston**, **Kennett**, **Gilbourne** and **McCann** also did well” – *The Advertiser*.
- “**H. McKenzie** (sic.) roved with consistent speed and great tenacity. He showed courage and stamina out of proportion to his small size. **Cox**, also roving, proved himself a very robust and reliable player, and made a good partner for **McKenzie** (sic). **Griffen** held his wing throughout the day against Kutcher (Sturt) and caused many forward moves.”

The Aftermath

Haydn Bunton’s prediction of a North premierships was nearly true as North would go lose in the Grand Final by 11 points to Port Adelaide. **Ian McKay**, rucking for the first few games of the season, would go on to win the Magarey Medal however **Alan Galloway** broke his wrist in Unley Oval game and did not return until the finals series.





Three players from the game taken later in the season. Alan Aldenhoven is being carried off after the 1951 Preliminary Final by Les Cunningham and Dean Stringer

Match Details:

North	7.5	13.9	21.14	25.17	167
Sturt	0.3	2.3	4.5	6.9	45
Ground:	Unley Oval			Crowd:	8,700

Best Players: Phillips, MacKenzie, Cox, Griffin, McKay, McKenzie, Stringer, Weston, Kennett, Gilbourne, McCann

Scorers: Stringer 8.3, Phillips 6.3, McKenzie 4.1, MacKenzie 2.4, Cox 2.1, Aldenhoven 2.1, Kennett 1.0, Gilbourne 0.1, rushed 0.3

The Team:

- F: Alan Aldenhoven, Dean Stringer, Darcy Cox
- HF: Don Gilbourne, Bill McKenzie, Paul Kennett
- C: Lyle Griffen, John Vaughan, Stan Hancock
- HB: Frank Crouch, Alan Galloway, John Blunden
- B: Lloyd Weston, Neil McCann, Keith Carroll
- 1R: Ian McKay, Ron Phillips, Hubert MacKenzie
- Res: Leslie Cunningham, Alfred Souter

Stats Fact

- North's 122-point winning margin – 9th highest margin ever against any team, 2nd highest against Sturt and highest at Unley Oval;
- North's 25.17 (167) – 4th highest score against Sturt and highest ever score at Unley Oval;
- North 7.5 (47) first quarter score – 3rd highest ever at Unley Oval;
- North 8.5 (53) third quarter score – highest ever at Unley Oval;
- Dean Stringer's 8.3 – equal 4th highest goals kicked at Unley Oval (behind Ken Farmer' 13 goals and 9 goal matches and Dennis Sachse's 9 goals);

Round 2 Stats Fact

- North's 25.17 (167) – 2nd highest score kicked;
- North 7.5 (47) first quarter score – equal 2nd highest;
- North 8.5 (53) third quarter score – 3rd highest score;
- Dean Stringer's 8.3 – equal 6th highest goals kicked in the round.

**David O'Hara
History Committee**