

**MENTONE AND
ST BEDES OLD COLLEGIANS
AMATEUR FOOTBALL CLUB**

HALL OF FAME INDUCTIONS – 2006

1976 Premiership Reunion



Compiled and edited by Mark Beasley, Rob Hess and Brett Marchant

Foreword

In 2004, the Centenary year of the club involved the inauguration of 100 Hall of Fame members including ten Legends of the Mentone Football Club, St Bedes Old Collegians Football Club, Mentone Junior Football Club and the club that evolved from them all, the St Bedes/Mentone Tigers Amateur Football Club. The Hall of Fame is open to all players, coaches, officials, match-day helpers and supporters. The criteria for nomination to the Hall of Fame covers the following areas:

- Significant (Hall of Fame) or outstanding (Legend) service to the club, with a minimum of 100 senior or Reserve games and/or ten years as an official; and/or
- Significant or outstanding achievement as an individual or as part of a team whilst playing, coaching or being active in administration; and/or
- Significant or outstanding achievement elsewhere in a sporting or community capacity after beginning their career at one of the constituent clubs.

In the inauguration of the Hall of Fame, there was a conscious attempt to capture a representation of people and events in the various histories of the clubs from 1904 to 2004 and to find a balance between players, coaches, officials and helpers in the various decades. Obviously any such attempt is subjective and open to debate. After sifting through annual reports and minutes of committee meetings, checking local papers and history books, and cross-checking assessments with key personnel of the various eras, the problem was not so much who should be included, but rather the dilemma of leaving out so many outstanding contributors to the history of the clubs in order to restrict the numbers to 100 (representing one person for each year of the centenary). The task was made more difficult by the fact that the history of the early years is somewhat murky, and by the reluctance of people to nominate themselves or others as possible Hall of Fame members.

Following the tremendous success of the inaugural Hall of Fame induction, members of the Hall of Fame Committee met to consider further nominations. It was decided that players and key personnel involved in the Olympic Year Premiership of 1956 and the 1976 Premiership were deserving of induction. To this end, the contributions of players, officials and supporters involved at the club during these two very successful eras in the club's history were assessed, and it was agreed that all premiership players that were not already members of the Hall of Fame should be inducted, along with other significant people from this period. The 1956 inductions occurred at a special function in May, while the 1976 inductions will occur at a function in August.

The Hall of Fame Committee would welcome any feedback on the above processes or criteria, or on possible future nominations, as further inductions into the Hall of Fame will occur on a regular basis. Corrections or further information about the achievements of Hall of Fame members are most welcome.

Mark Beasley, Rob Hess and Brett Marchant
Hall of Fame Committee, 2006

Acknowledgements

The following valuable sources of information, and supporters of the Hall of Fame, are gratefully acknowledged:

1. Russell Holmesby and Jim Main, *The Encyclopaedia of AFL Footballers: Every AFL/VFL Player Since 1897* (Melbourne: Information Australia, 1998).
2. Leo Gamble, *Mentone Through The Years* (Mentone: Leo Gamble, 2003), and staff of the Parkdale Library.
3. Federal Association and Federal League fixtures and annual reports, and the *Federal Football Record*.
4. The many people who have generously provided information and memorabilia on the club's history.
5. Stephen Maitland, of Maitland/Horler Estate Agents, for sponsorship of the 2006 Hall of Fame booklets.

Des Anthony

A tough half back flanker and occasional wingman, Des made his debut for the club in 1974, after playing in the Diamond Valley League. Runner up in the Reserves Best and Fairest award in his first season, he gained a reputation for training hard and turned himself into a regular senior player in 1975. In the following year, he was not only a member of the senior premiership team, coming off the bench to pick up Ian Cooper, playing coach of Cheltenham, but he was also coach of the Thirds in that season. After unearthing a number of promising juniors in his first year as coach of a junior team, Des had the satisfaction of coaching the Thirds to a grand final berth in 1977.

Dick Burke

Few people are more fondly remembered at Mentone than Dickie Burke. For more than fifteen years Dickie was the driving force behind firstly, the 'Black and Gold' club and then, during the 1970s, the 'Tigers Tails'. These were the supporter groups that kept the club finances ticking over and helped balance the books for the 1976 recruitment campaign. Dickie was also responsible for ensuring the refreshments were available for thirsty patrons and managing the club bar - small feat for Sunday games against local rivals Cheltenham and Parkdale that attracted huge crowds. An organiser of past player functions and vice president in 1975 and 1976, Dick was awarded Life Membership in 1976 and the Mentone bar ('Dickie Burke's Bar') still sports a plaque in his honour. [Dec.]

Ray Besanko

Ray displayed his footballing attributes very early in his junior career with Mentone, being named Best Team Man for the Fourths in 1968, Best First Year Player in the Thirds in 1970, and winner of the Most Sustained Effort award in the Thirds in 1971. In 1976, his grand final day finished early when in the third quarter he was hit behind play by his opponent and taken to hospital. Ray gave the club excellent service as a talented, tough, long-kicking backman and was runner up in the senior Best and Fairest award in 1979.

Kieran Breen

After picking up a trophy for being the Most Determined Player in the Fourths in 1971, Kieran returned to the club in 1976 to be an integral part of the senior premiership campaign, being the team's leading goal kicker in the final series and regarded as the unofficial best player on the ground on grand final day. Something of a larrikin off the field, he was a clever half forward flanker, who played eighteen games and kicked 32 goals for the season, polling well enough to finish sixth in the Best and Fairest award. Kieran had an interesting summer of bragging rights, as he played cricket at Cheltenham Cricket Club alongside a number of Cheltenham Football Club players. After a few years away from the club, he returned to Mentone to play his fiftieth game in the 1980 season.

Jim Coutts

Jim had more than two decades of involvement with the Mentone Football Club, stretching from two terms as President in 1951 and 1952, to being responsible for blowing the siren in the Tigers famous premiership victory in 1976. In between, Jim was a committeeman and vice president for more than ten years, and was regularly acknowledged in annual reports for marking the grounds, among other duties. He also served as the senior team's timekeeper for at least fifteen years. His service to the club was duly recognised with Life Membership. [Dec.]

Lindsay Cox

Part of a long tradition of efficient and loyal administrators at Mentone, Lindsay provided the club with more than a decade of off-field service, including five years as Secretary from 1970 to 1974, and a long apprenticeship as Assistant Secretary in the 1960s. Awarded the rare distinction of being named Best Clubman on two occasions (1970 and 1972), glowing tributes in annual reports attest to the many hours of work he devoted to the club. Lindsay received the ultimate accolade of Life Membership in 1974. [Dec.]

Mark Cullen

A highly regarded junior player, Mark won the best and fairest award in the Fourths in 1971. His coach, John Crozier, claimed that 'his success was due not only to his undoubted ability, but to attention to training and his desire to improve his game'. Mark completed a fine season by playing in the Thirds grand final that year, and then had a stint with St Kilda Under 19s before returning to the club in 1976 when he played his fiftieth game during the season. A back pocket player rarely caught out of position, Mark was an attribute to a solid defence in a senior premiership-winning team. Like Kieran Breen, he was another Mentone player who had a close connection to the defeated Cheltenham players as he played cricket with many of them at Cheltenham Cricket Club.

Jeff Hopgood

A giant ruckman, Jeff was the pick of the bunch in Mentone's recruiting spree prior to the 1976 season. After 42 games and eighteen goals at North Melbourne between 1968 and 1973, Jeff played for Coburg in the VFA in 1974, winning their Best and Fairest award. Appointed captain of Mentone in their premiership-winning year, he not only led the ruck division, but kicked a handy 21 goals during his nineteen games for the season, and had the reputation of being an 'enforcer', no more evident in the fiery grand final when Cheltenham wingman, Peter Charles, was removed from the ground on a stretcher. Jeff won the club's Most Consistent trophy in 1976, polling 29 votes in the Best and Fairest award. He was also selected as first ruck in the Federal League All-Stars team in 1976.

Roger Hore

A talented junior footballer who won a Most Determined award in 1967, was runner up in the Fourths Best and Fairest award in 1968, and who represented the Federal League juniors in 1970, Roger went onto play more than 100 games for the club but had an even bigger impact for Mentone off the field. From 1972 to 1998, Roger held almost every position in the club, including Committeeman, Social Secretary, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and President. He was a forthright Chairman of Selectors for the first eighteen, including the 1976 premiership team, and played a key role that year in recruiting a number of high-quality players. Roger also had roles as Team Manager of the Reserves, Under 18s and Under 16s, Federal League tribunal advocate, the footy trip organiser, and sponsorship fundraiser. He played a key role in ensuring the club was reinstated in the Federal League in 1980 when it was suspended after the infamous Parkdale game. Roger was awarded the Best Clubman in 1974 and was the youngest ever Life Member of Mentone at the age of only 22 in 1975.

Steve Latchem

Universally known as 'Tex', Steve was a laconic, beanpole ruckman who made his debut for the Tigers in 1975 after playing for Sandringham. Struck down with injury, he forced his way back into the senior team in 1976 and became a handy ruckman/forward. In the grand final, he got the team off to a sensational start by kicking two of his only four goals for the season in the first few minutes of the action-packed opening quarter.

Glen McDonnell

Described in the *Federal League Record* as an 'outstanding centre half back' who could 'take a great mark ... and dominate a game', Glen had an outstanding career with the Mentone juniors. Named as Best Team Player in the Fourths in 1969 and captain of that team in 1970 where he won the Best and Fairest award, Glen followed this up with another Best and Fairest trophy in the Thirds in the next season, when the team played off for the premiership. Glen then enjoyed a stint with the St Kilda Thirds and Reserves before returning to the club. Something of a young 'veteran', Glen won the Most Improved Player for the seniors in 1974, and had already played 80 games for the club when he held down the key defensive post in the 1976 grand final.

Nick McKenzie

A dashing, blond wingman, Nick cut his teeth in the Mentone junior teams, where he was nominated as the Most Promising Player in the Fourths in 1970, and was captain of the Thirds in 1973, when he was named 'Best Clubman' of that team. He added valuable pace to the centre line of the senior

premiership team in 1976 and was handy around goals. Drawing on his experience of more than 80 games for the club, Nick also had a reputation for slipping away from opponents, and was among the best in the 1976 finals series.

Steve Matthews

Referred to in the press as the 'Boy from Rupanyup', Steve made his debut for the club in 1975. He was a strong player who was difficult to move off the ball, an excellent overhead mark in pack situations, and part of a tall forward line in the 1976 premiership team. An accurate kick, Steve headed the senior goal-kicking list for the season with an excellent tally of 47, and finished a creditable fourth in the Best and Fairest award, polling 23 votes.

John Smith

A migrant from Scotland, John was introduced to Australian Rules at the age of eighteen when former Collingwood star Bruce Andrews was responsible for teaching him the finer points of the game. For almost 20 years John gave Mentone terrific service on and off the field. He was Most Improved in the Reserves in 1964, Best Team Man in 1966, and Best and Fairest in the Reserves in 1977 and 1980. Described in one annual report as 'A man who just does not know how to be beaten', 'Smithy' was a fierce competitor in his 208 games and was renowned for his fitness and for being first on the track and last off it. Off the field, he coached the Reserves and the Fourths, was the club's Federal League delegate, served on the committee, and readily became involved in organising social activities for the club. John was rewarded with Life Membership in 1970. After football, he was heavily involved in coaching professional athletics, enjoying regular success with his stable at the Stawell Easter meeting.

Andrew Sutherland

For more than 20 years throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Andy shuffled across the road from his Brindisi Street house to open and close the clubrooms during the week for senior and junior training. On the weekend, he was the ever-reliable gatekeeper who would stand in all weather conditions fronting the bluff of opposition supporters trying to avoid paying the entry fee. Andy also undertook the cleaning of the rooms including giving the old parquet floor a regular polish, and he served on the committee in 1965. In recognition of his loyal and tireless service, Andy's efforts were consistently acknowledged in countless annual reports, and he was awarded Life Membership in 1969. [Dec.]

Peter Varney

A true clubman from the time he commenced his playing career in 1961, Peter played in two junior premierships and was awarded Best Team Man for the Thirds in 1962. He then went on to provide Mentone with loyal and dedicated service until his last game in 1979 when he pulled on the boots one final time as coach of the Reserves. In his 133 games, Peter had an uncompromising approach to football, based on ensuring the body was fit, the mind was strong, and you hit the ball hard. He carried that philosophy into his coaching and made sure he gave something back to the game by coaching the Mentone Fourths from 1972 to 1974, the Thirds in 1975, and the Reserves in 1979. He also served on the general committee in 1971, 1972 and 1974, and was heavily involved in the social committee, organizing a number of functions, including several at his own home. Peter was awarded Life Membership in 1970 and together with his wife Margaret they received recognition as Best Club Persons in 1973, where the annual report noted that their efforts were considered to be 'above the normal call of duty'.



The 1976 Season in Review

By Rob Hess, Brett Marchant and Mark Beasley

Pre-Season

Mentone finished in the middle ranking of all four Federal League ladders at the end of the 1975 season, with the senior team finishing a disappointing seventh.¹ It was clear that the committee elected for the 1976 season was determined to turn things around, as the following lengthy off-season report from the local press makes clear:

Mentone Football Club under the leadership of Stan Kelly and new secretary Bruce Hope is looking forward to an exciting 1976. The Tigers were very disappointed last season in missing the final four by four points, so they will be having an all-out effort this season to make amends. The Club committee has appointed ex-Tiger David Groves as non-playing coach. Groves was captain of their last premiership team in 1968. He is one of the most popular and determined players to wear the tiger jumper. In 1969-70 he played with Stawell under Des Dickson (ex-Hawthorn). He then became captain and coach of Karingal in the Nepean League where he was runner-up in the best and fairest award in 1971 and '73. If he can pass on his skills to his new charges, he will become successful, as Mentone were a big strong side, but lacked skill last season. Groves said this week 'winning isn't everything – it's the only thing'. If the Tigers keep this in mind, they could take that extra step into the four. Peter Cerato, rover, has returned to Tigerland, after four years playing with Mildura and Mayne in Brisbane. Last season he had the distinction of making the Queensland inter-state squad. Another player to return to the club is Alan Sierakowski after playing with Caulfield in the VFA. The Mentone recruiting committee have struck the jackpot with the signing of ex-North Melbourne giant ruckman Geoff Hopgood. After leaving North Melbourne Hopgood played with Coburg VFA and won their best and fairest award in 1974. He could prove a sensation in Federal Football. The game in which Geoff clashes with McKinnon's champion Ray Johnston will be worth walking over broken glass to see. The club is hoping that all supporters will turn out on Sunday for a 'meet the coach' barbeque lunch at 7 Latrobe St., Mentone.²

However, John Polson, writer of the Federal Football League notes for the local press, was concerned about the recruiting sprees undertaken by a number of clubs, including Mentone, and he made the following dire prediction:

Minor or Junior football ... will die within five years if clubs keep on going the way that they are at present. Federal League Clubs are paying a huge amount of money in trying to win a flag. All clubs are trying to find a 6''6' ruckman and it is costing them between \$100-\$200 per week ... Mentone, Glenhuntly and Doveton are having an all-out drive in 1976 to improve their position on the ladder and all have said it will cost them big money.³

Never afraid to voice his opinion, Polson suggested that it was 'about time that the league executive committee had a good look at their clubs financial affairs and put a stop to this madness of payment to players. Before it is too late'.⁴ Just a few weeks later, the Federal League had a special meeting to consider expelling Glenhuntly for not being able to field junior teams, another aspect of concern in what was to become a troubled decade for the League. Glenhuntly had been a member of the Federal League since 1960, and a vote of 19 to 11 allowed them to stay in the competition.⁵

¹ In 1975, the Reserves finished ninth, the Thirds finished seventh, and the Fourths finished in eighth position on the ladder.

² John Polson, 'Giant Signs as Tigers' Ruck', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 18 February 1976, p. 11.

³ John Polson, 'Federal Football is on Skid Row', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 7 April 1976, p. 25.

⁴ Polson, 'Federal Football is on Skid Row', p. 25.

⁵ John Polson, 'Glenhuntly Beats Axe', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 28 April 1976, p. 35.

Round 1

When the new season began, it was obvious that big things were expected by the Tiger faithful. In the first club notes of the *Federal Football Record* for that season, 'Tiger Tail' wrote prophetically: 'This is the year, Tiger supporters. Our year. With our new coach David Groves who is "Roaring" to go, assistant coach David Moran. Welcome back boys. A new face in Tigerland who is Geoff Hopegood [sic], good luck Geoff and all the boys today.'⁶ Wayne Bromley had initially been appointed coach of the Thirds (Under 18s), but it was Des Anthony who took up duties, while Don Wells had control over the Fourths (Under 16s). Mentone opened the season with a thirteen point victory over Clayton, who were finalists in 1975, and it was clear even from this early stage that the enthusiasm of the scribe was well founded. As John Polson noted in the *Moorabbin Standard News*, 'Mentone had a thirteen points win over Clayton in a high standard game at Clayton. To get the four points at Clayton, by any margin, is a good win. Mentone's giant Jeff Hopgood did not get it all his own way in the ruck duels with the big Magpie Neil Wilkins'.⁷ The first-up victory placed the team fifth on the ladder, the only occasion they were outside the four during the season.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 16.16.112 def. Clayton 14.15.99

Goals: Cerato 5, A. Truscott 4, Matthews 3, Ansell 2, Jeff Richards 1, Sierakowski 1.

Best: Ansell, Hopgood, Marchant, Cerato, Sierakowski.

Reserves

Clayton 22.18.150 def. Mentone 7.8.50

Thirds

Clayton 26.16.172 def. Mentone 1.1.7

Fourths

Mentone 20.23.143 def. Clayton 6.10.46

Round 2

After the conclusion of the second round, Polson commented that: 'Mentone had to pull out all stops to beat Noble Park by 38 points. It was only the last quarter that the Tigers got on top of the much improved Noble Park'.⁸ However, the Tigers perched themselves nicely in the top four, and would stay there for the remainder of the season.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 18.16.124 def. Noble Park 12.14.86

Goals: Matthews 5, McKenzie 3, Cerato 3, Ansell 2, Hopgood, 1, Bignell 1, Marchant 1, Anthony 1, Breen 1.

Best: Matthews, Anthony, Marchant, Hopgood, Grattidge, Scanlon.

Reserves

Mentone 15.12.102 def. Noble Park 14.11.95

Thirds

Noble Park 34.20.230 def. Mentone 2.3.15

Fourths

Mentone 15.9.93 def. Noble Park 10.8.62

⁶ *Federal Football Record*, 24 April 1976, p. 11.

⁷ John Polson, 'Ray Carr's 14 Goals. Forwards on Top in First Federal Round', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 28 April 1976, p. 36.

⁸ John Polson, 'Vales Take Highett Apart', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 5 May 1976, p. 44.

Round 3

Despite a performance of the Moorabbin Pipe Band before the game and at half time, Polson was disappointed that:

The big Sunday clash between Cheltenham and Mentone turned out to be a real flop. The Tigers outmarked, outpaced the tired Rosellas after half time to win by 36 points ... Mentone's rucks in Jeff Hopgood, Brett Marchant, Peter Bromley and John Grattidge had a feast against the midget Cheltenham rucks in Ian Cooper, Laurie Woodman and Greg Dunn ... The Tigers are not a brilliant side, but David Groves has them playing on at all times, going in hard for the ball, and they never stop chasing. They will worry many clubs before the season is over. Ian Cooper has many headaches ahead of him, as some of his players are not up to Federal standard ... Allan Sierakowski gave the Tigers drive from the centre to be their best player.⁹

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 19.11.125 def. Cheltenham 12.17.89

Goals: Truscott 5, Matthews 4, Cerato 3, Hopgood 2, Bromley 1, Marchant 1, Breen 1, Besley 1.

Best: Sierakowski, Cerato, Matthews, Hopgood, Truscott, Marchant.

Reserves

Cheltenham 14.17.101 def. Mentone 12.9.81

Thirds

Cheltenham 27.35.197 def. Mentone 0.2.2

*Fourth*s

Mentone 17.14.116 def. Cheltenham 13.12.90

Round 4

With four points for the bye in this round, Mentone found itself as the only undefeated team at the top of the ladder. The Fourths were also undefeated, while the Seconds showed signs of being competitive. The Thirds struggled for numbers, but in hindsight coach Des Anthony was unearthing some good prospects for future years.

Round 5

The break caused by the bye suited the team, and they had little trouble accounting for Bentleigh. As Polson noted:

Mentone kept on their winning way with a 22 point win over the disappointing Bentleigh ... The Tigers are going to be hard to beat, as they never give in or stop chasing. Mentone received a lot of their drive from winger Norm Bignell and rover Peter Cerato.¹⁰

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 17.14.116 def. Bentleigh 13.18.96

Goals: Cerato 3, Bignell 3, Bromley 2, Ansell 2, Hopgood 2, Breen 2, Baird 1, Matthews 1, Besley 1.

Best: Bignell, Cerato, Ansell, Grattidge, Scanlon, Besley.

Reserves

Mentone 10.12.72 def. Bentleigh 10.10.70

⁹ John Polson, 'Dales Burst Bentleigh's Bubble', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 12 May 1976, p. 36.

¹⁰ John Polson, 'Cheltenham Out-Lasts Highett', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 26 May 1976, p. 36.

Thirds

Bentleigh 31.23.209 def. Mentone 1.5.11

Fourths

Mentone 12.8.80 def. Bentleigh 11.7.73

Round 6

East Caulfield were winless and on the bottom of the ladder when they faced up to Mentone in Round 6. Showing no mercy, the senior team had a percentage-boosting win (featuring no less than ten goal-kickers), and even the Thirds found the going easier after a series of morale-sapping defeats. Polson again emphasized the importance of Hopgood, Cerato and Sierakowski to Mentone's winning form:

Mentone had their biggest win for the season when they thrashed East Caulfield by 152 points ... To get on top of the Tigers you will have to stop Jeff Hopgood in the ruck. He is giving his smaller players first use of the ball with his knockouts. Then players like Sierakowski and Cerato cut the backs to pieces.¹¹

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 32.12.204 def. East Caulfield 7.10.52

Goals: Truscott 7, Cerato 5, McDonnell 4, Matthews 4, Breen 3, Grattidge 3, Bromley 2, Besley 2, Hopgood 1, Sierakowski 1.

Best: Sierakowski, Cerato, Hopgood, Breen, Truscott, McKenzie.

Reserves

Mentone 20.20.140 def. East Caulfield 11.3.69

Thirds

Mentone 32.23.215 def. East Caulfield 4.3.27

Fourths

Mentone 28.19.187 def. East Caulfield 3.2.20

Round 7

In Round 7, the seniors suffered their first defeat for the season against McKinnon. The match was obviously affected by windy conditions, as Mentone kicked six goals and kept McKinnon scoreless in the first quarter, yet scores were level at half-time. In the club notes, 'Tiger Tail' congratulated Peter Bromley on his 200th game, while Peter Cerato played his 150th game.¹² This round was also notable for the fact that Kevin Ward was reported in the Reserves match and later received a two week penalty for striking, while Peter Hess from the Thirds was reported for 'deliberate kicking' and later received a six match penalty. The Fourth found themselves on top of the ladder for the first time. Polson reflected on the senior loss as follows:

[Ninth placed] McKinnon defeated top side Mentone by 16 points in the biggest upset of Federal League round seven at the weekend. McKinnon won because its players pressured the Tigers for four quarters and never stopped chasing. The long awaited duel between the league's two giants, Ray Johnston and Mentone's Jeff Hopgood, was a fizzer. Both players played wide of each other and finished in their respective sides best players ... Unless the Tigers can show more fight they will be in trouble against both Parkdale and Springvale in the next few weeks.¹³

¹¹ John Polson, 'Oaks End McKinnon's Hopes', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 2 June 1976, p. 36.

¹² *Federal Football Record*, 12 June 1976, p. 11.

¹³ John Polson, 'Mentone Down in Upset', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 9 June 1976, p. 40.

Scoreboard

Seniors

McKinnon 13.9.87 def. Mentone 10.11.71

Goals: Truscott 4, Baird 2, Cerato 1, Bromley 1, Anthony 1, Besley 1.

Best: Cerato, Sierakowski, Hopgood, Baird, Scanlon, Truscott.

Reserves

Mentone 24.21.165 def. McKinnon 8.10.58

Thirds

McKinnon 18.12.120 def. Mentone 5.4.34

Fourths

Mentone 17.11.113 def. McKinnon 8.7.55

Round 8

This round saw easy victories for the two senior teams over Doveton, although the Fourths suffered their first defeat for the season. John Smith was reported in the Reserves for striking an umpire, but the case was later dismissed. No reports appeared in the press, hence the lack of some scoreboard detail.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 21.20.146 def. Doveton 7.14.56

Goals: Matthews 5, Baird 4, Cerato 4, Besley 2, Hopgood 2, Bromley 2.

Best: Besley, Cerato, Hopgood, McKenzie, Earle, Breen.

Reserves

Mentone 125 def. Doveton 54

Thirds

Mentone 76 def. Doveton 72

Fourths

Doveton 80 def. Mentone 74

Round 9

Parkdale were rated as a premiership contender, so the Round 9 clash with them at the half way mark of the season was an important match. This is how 'Tiger Tail' summed up the game: 'Great stuff fellas - there was certainly rejoicing at the clubrooms after our win against Parkdale. Credit in a large measure must go to our coach David Groves for his inspiration and gutsy performance in stripping, with a spartan display by skipper Jeff Hopgood and Peter Cerato'.¹⁴ As things turned out, it was not to be David's last game for the season. Polson was also fulsome in his praise:

Mentone finished all over Parkdale in last Saturday's Federal League 'game of the giants' at Parkdale, to win by 13 points. Mentone took the gamble of the year when it played its non-playing coach, David Groves. Groves, who had not played since 1968, showed he had lost little of his old skill. The Tigers also went into the game without big ruckman Peter Bromley and had Matthews, Anthony and Hopgood all playing with injuries. Mentone is now looking forward to playing Springvale in two weeks in what could be a preview of the grand final. Mentone's Peter Cerato gave another class display of roving to cut the Parkdale backs to

¹⁴ *Federal Football Record*, 26 June 1976, p. 12.

pieces. Cerato will start favourite to win the league's best and fairest medal, if he can hold his form for the rest of the season.¹⁵

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 15.22.112 def. Parkdale 13.21.99

Goals: Cerato 4, Truscott 4, Dwyer 2, Hopgood, 2, Ansell 1, Matthews 1, Besley 1.

Best: Cerato, Groves, Hopgood, Scanlon, Sierakowski, Earle.

Reserves

Parkdale 20.16.136 def. Mentone 8.11.59

Thirds

Parkdale 21.28.154 def. Mentone 1.5.11

Fourths

Mentone 16.12.108 def. Parkdale 5.10.40

Senior goal-kickers at the halfway mark of the season were as follows:

Cerato	28
Truscott	24
Matthews	23
Hopgood	10
Bromley	8
Besley	8
Baird	7
Ansell	7
Breen	7
McDonnell	4
Bignell	4
McKenzie	3
Grattidge	3
Dwyer	2
Marchant	2
Anthony	2
Sierakowski	2
Richards, Jeff	1

The ladder at the half way mark of the season was as follows:

	W	L	%	Pts
Mentone	8	1	152.1	32
Springvale	7	2	170.5	28
Cheltenham	7	2	103.9	28
<u>Parkdale</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>156.0</u>	<u>24</u>
Clayton	6	3	128.2	24
Oakleigh Districts	6	3	120.3	24
Bentleigh	6	3	117.1	24
McKinnon	5	4	100.5	20
Highett	4	5	99.8	16
Glenhuntly	3	6	96.9	12
Noble Park	3	6	74.1	12
Doveton	2	7	57.2	8
East Caulfield	0	9	32.8	0

¹⁵ John Polson, 'Dales Fail Big Test', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 23 June 1976, p. 36.

Round 10

After finishing the game with sixteen men, Mentone scraped home against Oakleigh Districts after leading all day. Opposition full forward Ray Carr was heading the Federal League goal-kicking ladder and kicked eight goals in a losing score. There were nine goal kickers for Mentone. Meanwhile in the Thirds, P. Chaplin for Mentone was reported and later suspended for ten weeks for 'deliberate kicking', while Gary Watson had a charge of unduly rough play dismissed.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 14.17.101 def. Oakleigh Districts 14.8.92

Goals: Breen 4, Marchant 2, Truscott 2, Besley 1, Earle 1, Sierakowski 1, Anthony 1, Dwyer 1, Hopgood 1.

Best: Breen, McKenzie, Sierakowski, Scanlon, Bignell, Besanko.

Reserves

Oakleigh Districts 150 def. Mentone 55

Thirds

Oakleigh Districts 101 def. Mentone 36

Fourths

Mentone 59 def. Oakleigh District 49

Round 11

As the list of reports from all clubs grew at an alarming rate, and the Federal League Executive debated whether or not to implement an order-off rule, Mentone faced up to a tough away game against Springvale, who were second on the ladder. In a low scoring game, where scores were level at half-time, Mentone ran out of steam and suffered their second defeat for the season, losing top spot on the ladder. As Polson explained:

Springvale returned to top place on the Federal League ladder after their convincing 28 points win over Mentone last Saturday ... Mentone will need to improve on their performance to have any chance in the race to win this season's flag. Springvale showed that the Tigers have a big weakness in their make up. They lacked the pace to keep up with the speedie Vales after half time ... In the first half Mentone received their drive from Allan Sierakowski in the centre. He was well on top of Springvale's captain-coach Brian Ford ... The most disappointing feature of the game was the form of Mentone's star players Jeff Hopgood and Peter Cerato. Both were unsighted for the game.¹⁶

Scoreboard

Seniors

Springvale 11.15.81 def. Mentone 7.11.53

Goals: Breen 2, McKenzie 2, Ansell 2, Hopgood 1.

Best: Sierakowski, Earle, Ansell, Breen, Scanlon, McKenzie.

Reserves

Springvale 9.10.64 def. Mentone 8.8.56

Thirds

Springvale 33.28.226 def. Mentone 1.1.7

Fourths

Mentone 9.11.65 drew Springvale 10.5.65

¹⁶ John Polson, 'Springvale Back on Top', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 7 July 1976, p. 36.

Round 12

Despite their lowly position on the ladder, Glenhuntly put in a creditable performance against the much stronger Tigers in Round 11. All three Mentone teams had wins, although in the Reserves Paul Rotherham was reported for attempted striking and best-on-ground Tony Frey was reported for kicking. Both cases were later dismissed.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 22.16.148 def. Glenhuntly 106

Goals: Grattidge 6, Breen 3, Marchant 3, Truscott 2, Matthews 2, Bostock 2, Cerato 2, Hopgood 1, Sierakowski 1.

Best: Sierakowski, Hopgood, Cerato, McKenzie, Bostock, Truscott.

Reserves

Mentone 153 def. Glenhuntly 88

Thirds

Mentone 90 def. Glenhuntly 17

Fourths

Mentone had the bye

Round 13

The pressure began to build in the latter half of the season, and despite another bag of goals from Joe Grattidge, the senior team were defeated by Highett with a goal kicked in time-on. Meanwhile, during the week, the League decided to hold the finals at Springvale. In the previous two seasons the finals had been held at Cheltenham, but according to Polson, the toilet arrangements were 'very poor'. He added that: 'I for one hope they brighten up the series with a band and marching girls and make them a day to remember'.¹⁷ The Fourths had their second drawn game for the season.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Highett 14.13.97 def. Mentone 14.10.94

Goals: Grattidge 5, Matthews 3, Truscott 2, Hopgood 1, Cerato 1, McKenzie 1, Besley 1.

Best: Sierakowski, Fullerton, Scanlon, Earle, McKenzie, Truscott.

Reserves

Highett 18.17.125 def. Mentone 5.10.40

Thirds

Highett 32.29.221 def. Mentone 0.5.5

Fourths

Mentone 13.4.82 drew Highett 10.7.67

Round 14

Mentone had an eye to the finals, and easily accounted for Clayton. As Polson noted: 'Mentone had an easy game against the very disappointing Clayton by the big total of 81 points ... Mentone rested Jeff Hopgood and Peter Cerato trying to get them over their injuries before the finals starts'.¹⁸

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 20.20.140 def. Clayton 8.11.59

¹⁷ John Polson, 'Oakleigh Puts an End to Clayton', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 21 July 1976, p. 40.

¹⁸ John Polson, 'Chelt. Beat Over-Rated Parkdale', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 28 July 1976, p. 40.

Goals: Matthews 5, Grattidge 4, Breen 3, McKenzie 2, Bignell 1, Truscott 1, Bromley 1, Sierakowski 1, Latchem 1, Moran 1.

Best: Cullen, Matthews, McKenzie, Marchant, Earle, Besanko.

Reserves

Clayton 26.21.177 def. Mentone 10.6.66

Thirds

Clayton 22.14.146 def. Mentone 4.8.32

Fourths

Mentone 17.13.115 def. Clayton 11.15.81

Round 15

In Round 15, all four Mentone sides were defeated by Noble Park. As 'Tiger Tail' explained, '[The] Seniors put on a poor and very lethargic display in which the handball fell apart under pressure and revealed definite problems as we were 10 points up at half-time and should have gone on with it.'¹⁹ Polson was a little more scathing in the report he wrote for the local paper:

Noble Park, with a team full of juniors, had a convincing win over a very tame Mentone in the Federal League last Saturday. With this loss Mentone has fallen from second to third place on the ladder – and will drop further before the season ends ... Over the last five weeks Mentone has only won two games, beating down-the-list Glenhuntly and Clayton. In the next weeks the Tigers have to play second team Cheltenham and fifth team Bentleigh. On their present form I can not see them winning either game. They could drop right out of the four ... Not only is their form down they are playing unfit players. Big ruckman Jeff Hopgood is trying to play with a bad back. He has not had a touch for weeks. This week they sat champion rover Peter Cerato on the bench then brought him on after half time, but he can not run or kick with his groin injury. If the Tigers hang onto their place in the four they can not win the flag as they lack pace and their hand ball is not good and over done, and some of their players are not up to senior football.²⁰

The Fourths were still in the top four, but were missing Matthew Hope who was interstate with a representative Under 16 team.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Noble Park 15.9.99 def. Mentone 12.14.86

Goals: Grattidge 4, Matthews 2, Breen 2, Hopgood 1, Truscott 1, Sierakowski 1, Curtain 1.

Best: Sierakowski, Follett, Matthews, McDonnell, Marchant, Grattidge, Scanlon

Reserves

Noble Park 17.19.121 def. Mentone 11.11.77

Thirds

Noble Park 42.15.267 def. Mentone 2.6.18

Fourths

Noble Park 6.19.55 def. Mentone 4.7.31

¹⁹ *The Federal Football Record*, 7 August 1976, p. 12.

²⁰ John Polson, 'Noble Park Tame Tigers', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 4 August 1976, p. 36.

Round 16

Mentone have always relished the big crowd-drawing Sunday games, and the return match against Cheltenham was no exception. Polson was quick to change his tune after witnessing the Tiger victory:

Mentone's coach David Groves lifted his team from the floor to look a real premiership hope with their convincing win over second team Cheltenham ... In the big Sunday clash Mentone outmarked, outpaced and outplayed a very disappointing Cheltenham to run out easy winners by 33 points. Mentone, after their shocking display last week against Noble Park, came back with a complete reversal of form. Full marks should go to David Groves. He picked his players up from the floor then to play their best football for the season, all in one week. Against Noble Park they were flat footed, their handball was sloppy and ill directed. Jeff Hopgood could not bend, Peter Cerato could not run or kick. This week they were full of running, their handball spot on. Hopgood won well in the ruck and Cerato cut the Cheltenham backs to piece ... Mentone looked a far better side after half time when Alan Sierakowski went back to his right position in the centre. He brought other players into the game with his clever play to be the best player on the ground.²¹

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 16.13.109 def. Cheltenham 10.16.76

Goals: Breen 3, Matthews 2, Hopgood 2, Sierakowski 2, Besley 2, Marchant 1, Latchem 1, Follett 1.

Best: Sierakowski, McDonnell, Cerato, Hopgood, McKenzie.

Reserves

Cheltenham 21.12.138 def. Mentone 4.12.36

Thirds

Cheltenham 19.13.127 def. Mentone 3.1.19

Fourths

Cheltenham 15.9.99 def. Mentone 9.9.63

Round 17

Mentone had the bye in this round, and as Polson pointed out: 'Springvale, Mentone, Cheltenham and Parkdale have sealed their place in the Federal District League's final four for 1976 and have no risk of being dislodged even if they lose next week.'²²

Round 18

Mentone had something of a fright against a team that would not be participating in the finals. Polson explained that: 'Once again Bentleigh failed to win a big game after leading by two goals at half time against Mentone'. He went on to acknowledge that: 'The Mentone club made a presentation to Peter Bromley after the game to mark his 202 games for the club. Peter came up through the junior grades to become senior captain in 1975, and in 1973 won the club's champion trophy'.²³ After sitting in the four for most of the season, the Fourths did not make the finals.

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 15.17.107 def. Bentleigh 13.12.90

Goals: Matthews 5, Grattidge 4, Hopgood 2, Follett 2, Breen 2.

Best: Earle, Hopgood, Matthews, Cerato, Ansell, Besley.

²¹ John Polson, 'McKinnon and Tigers Back', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 11 August 1976, p. 36.

²² John Polson, 'Final Four Sealed', *Mordialloc Chelsea News*, 18 August 1976, p. 36.

²³ John Polson, 'All Set for Finals Clash', *Mordialloc Chelsea News*, 25 August 1976, p. 36.

Reserves

Mentone 9.20.74 def. Bentleigh 8.15.63

Thirds

Bentleigh 37.23.245 def. Mentone 3.2.20

Fourths

Bentleigh 11.16.82 def. Mentone 9.10.64

The ladder at the end of the season was as follows:

	W	L	%	Pts
Springvale	16	2	180.8	64
Mentone	14	4	135.5	56
Cheltenham	14	4	125.7	56
Parkdale	13	5	146.9	52
Oakleigh Districts	11	7	134.0	44
Bentleigh	11	7	125.7	44
Clayton	10	8	107.1	40
McKinnon	10	8	103.6	40
Highett	9	9	108.6	36
Noble Park	9	9	100.1	36
Glenhuntly	4	14	77.1	16
Doveton	4	14	49.5	16
East Caulfield	1	17	28.7	4

Second Semi Final

Reports in the two local newspapers occasionally varied. The *Mordialloc Chelsea News* headed their report 'Tigers Maul Springvale' and recorded that: 'Mentone have gone straight into the Federal League grand final after their 15 point win over the hot favourites, Springvale, in the second semi final at Springvale'.²⁴ The *Moorabbin Standard News* had the headline 'Tigers in Grand Final', explaining that: '... After a very poor first half Alan Sierakowski lifted his play to show the crowd the form that won him the best and fairest medal. The star of the game was Mentone's rover Peter Cerato. His roving, kicking and hand ball was worth going a long way to see'.²⁵

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 14.4.88 def. Springvale 9.19.73

Goals: Cerato 5, Breen 3, Matthews 3, Hopgood 1, Bromley 1.

Best: Cerato, Breen, Latchem, Hopgood, McDonnell, McKenzie

Preliminary Final

Cheltenham accounted for Springvale in the preliminary final, but their winning form was not enough to sway the pundits. Polson made the following prediction: '... Cheltenham have not won a flag since 1934 ... David Groves Mentone's coach said I am not to pick them under any circumstances and Ian Cooper is always complaining that I never select them to win. Sorry chaps Mentone to win by a short half head'.²⁶

²⁴ John Polson, 'Tigers Maul Springvale', *Mordialloc-Chelsea News*, 8 September 1976, p. 32.

²⁵ John Polson, 'Tigers in Grand Final', *Moorabbin Standard News*, 8 September 1976, p. 44.

²⁶ John Polson, 'Cheltenham to Meet Tigers in Final', *Mordialloc-Chelsea News*, 15 September 1976, p. 40.

Grand Final

The grand final received extensive coverage in the local press, and some newspapers featured action photographs from the game. Writing in the *Chadstone Progress*, Polson opened his account of the match by claiming that: 'Mentone won a rough 'n' tumble Federal League grand final by the small margin of six points over a very unlucky Cheltenham in a day of sensations at Springvale'.²⁷ Noting that eleven players had been reported (with two players taken to hospital), he related how the day had started badly for Mentone, with Peter Bromley injuring himself coming down the race. Brett Marchant took his place in the starting eighteen, while coach David Groves sat on the bench. The game was played in windy conditions in front of a large crowd, and Polson observed that umpire Don Casey had his hands full as Jeff Hopgood downed Peter Charles from Cheltenham and 'skirmishes' broke out all over the field. Mentone led by nine points at half time, but late in the third quarter Ray Besanko was knocked out behind play. This changed the momentum of the game, and after two quick goals from Ian Cooper, Cheltenham grabbed the lead early in the last quarter. However, Polson praised the Tigers, claiming that: 'Full marks must go to Mentone's coach David Groves. His players lifted themselves to fight back to hit the front and hold on by six points'. He also concluded his report by pointing out that: 'Under Groves' coaching Mentone have come from a side that had very little skill last season to become a first class team with many great players and deserved to win the flag'.²⁸

Scoreboard

Seniors

Mentone 12.17.89 def. Cheltenham 12.11.83

Goals: Breen 3, Besley 2, Latchem 2, Matthews 2, Hopgood 1, Ansell 1, Sierakowski 1.

Best: Breen, McKenzie, Matthews, Hopgood, Besley, Ansell.

1976 Senior Premiership team

B M. Cullen J. Scanlon S. Fullerton

HB W. Earle G. McDonnell R. Besanko

C N. McKenzie A. Sierakowski N. Bignell

HF M. Follett J. Hopgood (C.) K. Breen

F K. Ansell B. Marchant S. Matthews

RR S. Latcham R. Besley P. Cerato

19th D. Anthony **20th** D. Groves (Coach)

Squad: P. Bromley, J. Grattidge, L. Bostock, S. Watson, D. Curtain, J. Smith

President: S. Kelley, **Secretary:** B. Hope, **Treasurer:** A. Grikis

Chairman of Selectors: R. Hore, **Runner:** N. Beavis, **Team Manager:** T. Webb

²⁷ John Polson, '11 Reports in Final – Tigers Win', *Chadstone Progress*, 22 September 1976, p. 56.

²⁸ Polson, '11 Reports in Final', p. 56.



SENIOR PLAYERS' AGES, HEIGHTS & WEIGHTS

MENTONE

Name	Age	Ht.	Wt.
J. Hopgood (capt.)	28	6.4	16.9
R. Besanko	23	6.1	12.7
A. Truscott	30	6.0	12.8
K. Ansell	21	5.6	10.7
P. Cerato	23	5.8	11.7
N. Bignell	28	5.8	11.3
P. Bromley	27	6.3	15.0
B. Marchant	16	6.2	12.0
L. Bostock	20	5.8	12.7
N. McKenzie	20	5.9	11.11
J. Scanlon	31	6.1	14.7
J. Grattidge	29	6.3	13.12
D. Anthony	28	5.10	12.0
A. Sierakowski	24	6.0	13.0
W. Earle	25	5.8	13.0
S. Fullerton	23	6.2	12.7
K. Ward	19	6.0	12.6
G. McDonnell	23	6.0	13.0
S. Mathews	21	6.2	14.7
K. Breen	21	5.9	11.3
D. Moran	25	5.9	12.7
D. Curtain	22	5.10	11.8
R. Besley	20	6.0	12.9
M. Follett	23	5.10	12.7
M. Cullen	21	5.8	11.0
S. Latchem	25	6.3	13.4
S. Watson	19	5.10	12.7

CHELTENHAM

Name	Age	Ht.	Wt.
Rowe, J.	28	183	99.0
Williams, S.	19	185	74.0
Hutchinson, F.	30	175	75.0
Hewitt, M.	28	189	95.0
O'Donnell, J.	29	188	88.0
Dunn, G.	24	185	86.0
Austin, J.	29	191	93.0
Sloss, S.	19	172	68.0
Donnell, M.	19	183	77.0
Webster, A.	27	180	93.0
Williams, E.	28	175	70.0
Keddie, J.	30	180	77.0
Smith, G.	18	188	79.0
Hocking, R.	28	173	72.0
Ansell, G.	23	172	83.0
Bailer, E.	30	172	76.0
Selleck, D.	19	173	69.0
Sheppard, P.	19	178	79.0
Cooper, I.	30	192	85.0
Lanyon, R.	23	185	93.0
Burnham, R.	23	180	76.0
Jones, B.	31	183	90.0
Kersey, G.	26	185	83.0
McAllen, D.	29	175	74.0
Deacon, S.	22	183	82.0
Charles, P.	19	170	69.0
Rodwell, M.	19	165	66.0
Phillips, G.	23	180	76.0
Riddle, R.	24	185	96.0
Boultjens, W.	25	180	76.0
Brown, I.	23	175	66.0

²⁹ *Federal Football Record*, 18-19 September 1976, p. 8.

Senior goal-kickers at the end of the season (including finals) were as follows:

Matthews	47
Cerato	36
Truscott	32
Breen	32
Grattidge	26
Hopgood	21
Besley	14
Ansell	10
Bromley	10
Sierakowski	9
McKenzie	8
Marchant	8
Baird	7
Bignell	5
Latchem	4
McDonnell	4
Dwyer	3
Follett	3
Anthony	3
Bostock	2
Curtain	1
Richards, Jeff	1
Earle	1
Moran	1

Aftermath

Three Mentone players were selected in the 'Griffith Panel Works All Star Team' for 1976. Hopgood was named captain of the team, while Cerato and Sierakowski were also selected.³⁰ 'Siera' also topped off a stellar season by winning the J. W. Allnutt Trophy for the Senior Best and Fairest Player in the Federal League, polling 31 votes, including nine 'three vote' performances for being best afield, and seven votes clear of his closest rival. Jeff Hopgood finished in equal fifth position with eleven votes.³¹ As for club awards, the following players were trophy winners for the 1976 season:

Seniors

Best and Fairest	:	A. Sierakowski
Runner Up	:	P. Cerato
Most Consistent	:	J. Hopgood
Most Determined	:	J. Scanlon
Best Team Man	:	R. Besley
Coach's Trophy	:	N. Bignell

Reserves

Best and Fairest	:	J. Sanders
Runner Up	:	J. Smith
Most Consistent	:	P. Sigmont
Most Determined	:	S. Watson
Best Team Man	:	D. Curtain
Coach's Trophy	:	J. Sanders

Thirds

Best and Fairest	:	S. Watters
Runner Up	:	S. Jones
Most Consistent	:	G. Watson

³⁰ Polson explained that Ian Cooper was named coach of the team for 'lifting Cheltenham to the grand final with a team comprising many young local players', Polson, '11 Reports in Final', p. 55.

³¹ *Federal Football Record*, 4-5 September 1976, p. 13.

Most Determined	:	P. McGann
Best Team Man	:	M. Young
Coach's Trophy	:	R. Ratcliffe

Fourths

Best and Fairest	:	Matthew Hope
Runner Up	:	V. L'Huillier
Most Consistent	:	R. Moncreiff
Most Determined	:	P. Ellingsen
Best Team Man	:	M. O'Brien
Coach's Trophy	:	P. Callahan

The one sad note following the grand final victory was the passing of Bruce Hope. The sports section of the local press carried the following tribute: 'Secretary of the Mentone Football Club, Bruce Hope, died of a heart attack last week. He was 45. Bruce had been associated with sport in the district for most of his life ... Bruce was born in Mentone, went to Mordialloc-Chelsea High School and Mentone Grammar where he played in their football and cricket teams ... [He] played football with Mentone Thirds some years ago ... His three sons, Mark, Matthew and Andrew are prominent footballers ...'³² Bruce was post-humously awarded the Best Clubman award for the 1976 season, and in the club's annual report David Groves claimed that he 'was the ultimate any coach could want in a Secretary'.³³

Recollections from Noel Beavis

1976 is a year I will never forget. So much went on it was like a television soap opera - every week was an Experience! After an earlier car mishap I had a couple of years off from playing and had the pleasure of being the team runner that year. The team arguably underperformed given the tremendous talent level and how close the grand final ended up being. No-one should have come close to this team.

After easily dealing with Springvale in the second semi-final, the grand final against old rival Cheltenham was eagerly awaited by all. I can still vividly see many of the highs and lows. It started with the anguish on Peter Bromley's face after spraining an ankle going down the race and having to give up his spot to the coach who started on the bench. Young Brett Marchant came off the bench to start at full forward! 'Tex' Latchem on fire in the first quarter with two great goals from half forward (a real nifty flanker!). 'Hoppy' dispatching the emerging Cheltenham star, Peter Charles, right in front of our bench which started the great brawl of 1976.

Somehow the umpires regained control of fights all over the field (some should still be serving suspensions) The umps advise the coaches at half time that any repeat of the fisticuffs would mean game abandonment. Obviously Ian Cooper saw that as a challenge and promptly dealt with Ray Besanko when the game resumed. I still look at my St Kilda premiership photograph and wish I could cut him out of it. 'Grovesy' onto the field in the last and straight into the ruck! The crowd could sense another brawl but somehow common sense prevailed.

Cheltenham slowly claws back our big lead but the siren rings just as Cooper hits the post. We had won and the party began. I can still see mild (Headmaster!!) 'Scanna' kicking some speakers in joy back at the rooms.

The night went forever and continued at the Mentone pub all day Monday. A lot of untellable stories came out of that day (right Moose?).

For those who thought the part was over, think again. A few weeks later we picked up the trophy at St Kilda social club and partied all night at Siera's and went from there to the Beauy pub for early openers. My liver has only just recovered.

From my end I graduated in Chemical Engineering from Monash the following year. After several years working in a small plant in Port Melbourne I moved to Germany then Taiwan and for the last

³² 'Bruce Hope Dies', *Mordialloc-Chelsea News*, 29 September 1976, p. 40.

³³ Mentone Football Club, *Annual Report 1976*, p. 13.

fourteen years have worked in the USA (Chicago). I am currently regional VP Operations for a multinational. My wife Terri and I have 3 boys

Best regards to all at Mentone and congratulations to the 1976 Hall of Fame inductees.

Noel Beavis

Recollections from Mark Cullen

I must admit that, 30 years on, my memories of my 1976 Mentone Tigers football season are sketchy at best. I most certainly remember a Premiership formula that year; a tough coach that trained us hard and set a solid example; a group of seasoned players that provided great big game experience that any premiership team requires and a group of younger players (of which I include myself!) that had grown up through the junior ranks of the club who would run through the proverbial brick wall for a win.

I do recall that Springvale was the team to beat that year, and that we unexpectedly prevailed in the second semi-final despite an aggressive, partisan crowd at their home ground. Cheltenham then did us a huge favour by beating them the following week and setting up the 1976 local derby.

The game was always going to be an interesting one given the geographical proximity of both teams and the fact that both sides had good friends on opposite sides. It was particularly challenging for me and Kieran Breen as we both played our junior and senior cricket and spent all summer around the Cheltenham club.

Any pleasantries were quickly forgotten on the big day, when early in the game 'Chicka' Charles tried to baulk three Tigers and paid the 'straight arm' penalty. The infamous brawl then erupted which lasted long enough to bring the local constabulary onto the ground to demand an immediate end to proceedings without a result for either side. Assault and battery charges and a night at the local Springvale Police lock up were also threatened if the brawling continued!

I was playing in the back pocket picking up Graeme Ansell (brother of our champion rover, Ken). When then fight broke we just looked at each other and started wrestling. I can't recall the outcome (or I probably don't want to!).

My other memories of the day were 'Broma' tearing his Achilles in the room prior to the start, resulting in coach Groves coming out of retirement to provide his final cameo appearance, pulling on the boots for one last time. I also recall great performances on the day by Sierakowski, Cerato, Besley and given my position on the field I can personally attest to the king hit on Ray Besanko.

I still have a copy of the 1976 Tiger team photograph and challenge my deteriorating memory from time to time by attempting to put names to faces. I think for a lot of us on the team, the 1976 premiership victory will always be cherished and special as winning a team premiership in any sport, at any level is very rare. Certainly for me, it is my only premiership in a lifetime of playing and loving team sports. For this, I would like to thank my fellow team mates of the 1976 Mentone Football Club premiership with whom I shared this memorable experience and wish them the best of 'tiger' luck for the next 30 years and beyond.

Mark Cullen

Postscript: Mark's football career ended the following season in 1977 when, having shifted to be a school teacher up the bush and playing for Woorineen versus Hay in the Swan Hill League, a large wheat farmer fell across him causing a serious knee injury requiring three knee reconstructions. In the life journey that followed, Mark gave up teaching and went to work in financial services and now lives with his family in New York working in Park Ave., New York.

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