

Old Scotch flag drought grows by another season

Old Scotch is stuck in premiership limbo, missing what could have been their first flag since 1978 after suffering a 92-point Premier B grand final belting at the hands of Caulfield Grammarians on Saturday.

After a gruelling one-point loss to the Caulfield in the second semi-final, Old Scotch faced a taxing extra week of footy in getting through the preliminary final, which led to a fractured performance in the big dance.

In what was their biggest defeat of the year the Cradinals lost 17.22 (124) to

VFA Grand Final

Nikolas Zakharia

4.8 (32).

The siren couldn't have come sooner for Cardinals coach Barry Mitchell, who said his side was outperformed by the Fields.

"Caulfield had the wind in the first quarter," he said. "I think the second quarter is what hurt us in terms of not being able to utilise the wind.

"From then we really couldn't get anything going for the whole day. On those types of days that's the sort of result that can happen. I

don't think it's indicative of the year, but Caulfield were the best team so they deserve to win."

Skipper Gene van den Broek put up a strong performance while Jack Bull tried picking up the pieces throughout the game.

"Their pressure on us and our inability to hit our targets was probably the area where we got hurt the most," Mitchell said. "I think our effort was still there, whilst it wasn't at the level it's been this year."

Moving up to Premier next year, Old Scotch faces a challenge.

"I think you're always looking to improve and obviously it's going to be harder next year, but all in all we won 17 games and lost four games so that's a very good year in B grade," Mitchell said. "We've done everything we needed to do apart from yesterday, so now it's a matter of continuing to develop players, younger players and also the older players who look to improve and the club who look to improve."

Old Scotch (Goals): G. van den Broek 2, T. McKinley 2 (Best): C. Cormack, J. Bull, W. Mitchell, N. Jamieson.



Old Scotch is left shattered after its grand final defeat at Elsternwick Park on Saturday. Picture: David Crosling

That flag was pretty special

South Yarra legend Owen Pearse celebrates fightback win

There's been times in recent years when Balwyn-based South Yarra has been more likely to shut up shop than stand on a victory dais.

Shunted from home ground to home ground, a period spent in recess, even dropping back a division last summer, it's never been easy for the Yarras.

But those struggles are now a distant memory after its Division 4 grand final win over Lyndhurst on a rain-battered Keysborough Reserve.

Owen Pearse pulled on the South Yarra jumper 503 times, more than any other in the club's history. And after being at the club for more than three-quarters of his life in just about every role possible, he reckons the win was pretty special.

After a two-win season in 2018, the Yarras dropped back a division to consolidate. It didn't start well, losses to Lyndhurst and Frankston Dolphins ushered in the new season.

"The first two games everyone wrote us off," Pearse said. "But we knew in ourselves it was a bit of an aberration. I was confident all year. I strongly believed we could go all the way.

"It (grand final) was a magical moment. I was

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drenched, the supporters were drenched, but we couldn't care less."

The Yarras have been nudged from ground to ground, moving from Fawkner Park to Howard Dawson Reserve to TH King Reserve and then Fritsch Holzer Reserve. Earlier this season Fritsch Holzer was deemed unfit for play and the Yarras again packed their bags and landed at Leigh Park in Balwyn North.

"Ever since I have been with the club I've called us the nomads," he said. "We've never had a place to call home, never had a social club, never even had a place to put the trophy cabinet."

In 2007 a player shortage left the club so undermanned it had to spend a season in recess. Pearse said he feared the club may not get back out on the park.

"It was that grim," he said. "When you go into recess, it's hard to get the people back."

But the Yarras did come out the other side and, in the past year or two, they've undergone growth that would be the envy of most.

South Yarra fields firsts,

seconds and thirds, a women's team and has healthy netball numbers. Pearse said there could be a few more netballers running around next season with hopes of reactivating the club's junior program.

He also said the growth in women's footy had been particularly pleasing, with the Yarra girls putting up a brave effort this year.

In just its second season, South Yarra limped through the campaign with a hefty injury toll and, with just 12 fit players, went within three points of a win in the elimination final.

"If they had have got over that, I reckon they could have gone all the way as well," Pearse said.

Despite being forced to clear more hurdles that Sally Pearson, Pearse said the reason for South Yarra's success was pretty simple.

"I honestly believe it's the people," he said. "We did a survey a few years ago and what really came through was that it was all about the people here.

"It's been like that for many a year. Maybe it's the fact we have absolutely nothing and other clubs seem to have so much and it's like we're saying 'stuff it' to the world."



After some pretty tough years, South Yarra legend Owen Pearse reckons this year's flag win was special. Picture: Sarah Matray

The final siren

HOW GOOD VERMONT?

EFL: As Vermont completed back-to-back flag wins, in its fourth consecutive grand final appearance on Saturday, attention turned to one question: Where should this Eagles side rank among the club's greatest teams? The decider was mostly one-sided as Harmit Singh's side produced a dominant home-and-away season, which took in only one defeat.

WILLY TOO STRONG

VFA: Though Ajax surged back from a 35-point halftime deficit to draw within nine points of Williamstown CYMS five minutes into the last quarter, they could go no further and Williamstown CYMS are champions, 11.13 (79) to 9.6 (60).

DINGLEY DOES IT AGAIN

SNFL: It was a familiar sight on the premiership dais: jubilant Dingley players, with their beaming coach, Shane Morwood. On Saturday, the Dingoes captured their fourth Southern league Division 1 flag in five years, defeating Cheltenham by 12 points. Two weeks earlier Chelt had thrashed the Dingoes by 63 points but Dingley saluted 7.7 (49) to 5.7 (37) on the day that mattered.