

Frank Spillane

..... was graded with Wests in 1925 straight from the junior B Grade competition where he played in 1924. The Arrow newspaper on 15 May 1925 reported; "The latest additions are F. Spillane (forward) and R. Wheldon (halfback). Both played B Grade juniors last season. Spillane is a big husky chap, well under the age of 21, and should soon find a place in the first team, being a solid tackler and fast in the open. From B Grade juniors to Reserve Grade in one season is excellent progress." Frank Spillane played eleven Reserve Grade games in 1925, although he was sometimes referred to as A. Spillane.

WESTERN SUBURBS.—Full-back: R. Buckley (21). Three-quarters: O. Rumph (22), F. Elliott (23), A. Morris (36), J. Holmes (25). Halves: A. Mendel (26), E. Wheldon (27). Forwards: A. Smith, Capt. (28), E. Parsons (29), H. Walsh (30), C. Gilbert (31), J. Petersen (32), A. Spillane (33). Reserves: H. Conley (34), A. McArthur (35), C. Britten (37), F. Harpley (38).

Wests Reserve Grade 18 July 1925

Frank made his First Grade debut in round five of the 1926 season. Wests had a good win over St George and Frank scored a try. He cemented himself in the First Grade team for the remainder of the season playing twelve games in the top grade.

In 1927, Frank played every competition game in First Grade bar one. The one game in which he did not play First Grade, was round fourteen when he lined up for the Third Grade team. Up until that point in his career he had played in the front row, but when he came back in round fifteen, he transformed himself into the lock forward position where he remained for the rest of the year. Frank earned representative honors in 1927, being selected for Metropolis v Country Firsts, and NSW v Queensland.

Frank reverted to the second row in 1928, and played all twelve competition games. He had the honor of captaining Wests First Grade team for the last five games of the season. Frank along with Ken Sherwood and Frank Matterson played the most number of First Grade games in 1928. Frank also represented City Firsts and NSW Seconds that year.

Wests had plenty of good players to contest First Grade positions in 1929. Frank Spillane was trialling with the first Grade team prior to the start of the competition, but did not make the top grade when the season opened. He played in the Reserve Grade team for the first half of the year, but was back in First Grade by round nine. This game was Jim Parsons last one in First Grade, as he surprisingly announced his immediate retirement. This opened up an opportunity for Frank Spillane and he made the most of it by playing nine out of the ten remaining games in First Grade.



Frank Spillane 1929

It was Wests year in 1930, taking out its first premiership. Frank Spillane was back to his best and played every competition game, including the semi final and final, in First Grade. However, disappointingly it was announced in the lead up that Frank had been dropped for the Grand Final

challenge, with Frank Matterson coming into the team. But was he? It wasn't that Frank was out of form, as the post match review of the Final loss to St George the week previous, nominated Bill Brogan and Frank Spillane as Wests best forwards.

For the winners McCormick played soundly, and kicked with judgment; Freestone and Lennox, of the backs, were deserving of special mention, while the forwards to a man played excellently. For Western Suburbs, Pearce and Sherwood in the backs, the former being the outstanding back on the field, and Brogan and Spillane rose above their colleagues.

SMH 29 September 1930

However the program in Rugby League News, printed for the Grand Final challenge has Frank Spillane listed in a pack of eight, with two to be omitted.

SYDNEY SPORTS GROUND		Saturday, October 4, 1930	
First Grade—GRAND CHALLENGE FINAL			
WESTERN SUBURBS		ST. GEORGE	
Western Suburbs Colors—Black and White		St. George Colors—Red and White	
FULL-BACK: 1—F. McMillan		FULL-BACK: 13—J. McCormack	
THREE-QUARTERS: 2—A. Brady C. Pearce—3 4—K. Sherwood R. Morris—5		THREE-QUARTERS: 9—E. Freestone J. Lennox—15 10—G. Ward B. Martin—22	
HALVES: 28—J. Ross J. Craig (Capt.)—3		HALVES: 9—J. Flower A. Sadler—50 10—A. Traynor (One to be omitted)	
FORWARDS: 9—F. Matterson C. Cornwell—1 12—W. Carpenter W. Brogan—3 15—R. Lindfield C. Rhodes—3 10—F. Spillane V. Hughes—3 (Two to be omitted)		FORWARDS: 2—B. Hyland P. Fairall—14 3—W. Greenlands W. Hardman—4 6—R. Schuman H. Flower—49	
RESERVES: 25—H. Rigby J. Kelly—4 26—J. Peterson L. Mead—6			

1930 Grand Final Challenge - Wests 27 v St George 2

The reports from the match clearly indicate that Vince Sheehan didn't play, but there was conflicting reports as to whether it was Frank Spillane or Bill Carpenter that was in the pack. The report below from the Referee indicates that Frank Spillane played, however nearly every other report referred to Bill Carpenter and actually described Carpenter being involved in the action. It is concluded that Frank Spillane did not play in the match that secured Wests first premiership.

F. Matterson, who re-appeared, has thickened since last season, but shaped well. Brogan (always heady and quick), Spillane, Lindfield, Cornwall, and Rhodes were all at their top, with condition perfect.

Referee 8 October 1930

Frank Spillane played three more seasons with Wests and never rose to the same heights. In those years he played another eight First Grade games in 1932 which was enough to earn him selection in City Firsts that year, but he spent most of his time in Reserve Grade and even played a couple of games in Third Grade.

Frank played one hundred and twenty four games for Wests over eight seasons, with seventy four of these in First Grade, forty seven in Reserve Grade and three in Third Grade. In all games he scored twenty five tries and kicked ten goals for a total of ninety five points.

In 1934, Frank Spillane had a final year in Grade rugby league when he went across to the University Rugby League Club and joined his brother Jack who had been with University since 1933. Both Frank and Jack Spillane were regular First Grade players while with the University Club.

Debbie Spillane in her essay, " The View from the Ladies Stand: 13th annual Tom Brock Lecture", talks about her grandfather and his love of rugby league. Rugby League was a passion for the Spillane family with regular attendance at the Ladies Stand at the SCG.

Frank Spillane died at Croydon (Burwood), NSW in October 1986. His memorial is at the Rookwood Catholic Cemetery and Crematoria, Rookwood, NSW, Sect. Lawn 6, Row Plot 61'