



1976 Round 1 Sunday 21st March Lidcombe Oval



Western Suburbs 8

def.

Eastern Suburbs 5

Wayne SMITH
 Don ROGERS
 Ron GITEAU
 Robbie PARKER
 Russell MULLINS
 Graeme O'GRADY
 Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)
 Les BOYD
 Geoff FOSTER
 John ELFORD
 John DONNELLY
 John PURCELL
 Peter YOUNG
 Mick LIUBINSKAS

Fullback
Wing
Centre
Centre
Wing
Five-eighth
Half
Lock
Second Row
Second Row
Front Row
Hooker
Front Row
Replacement
Replacement

Russell FAIRFAX
 Ian SCHUBERT
 John BRASS (c)
 Mark HARRIS
 Bruce PICKETT
 Kevin STEVENS
 John MAYES
 Ron COOTE
 Barry REILLY
 Peter FITZGERALD
 Ken JONES
 Elwyn WALTERS
 Royce AYLIFFE
 Terry KEEN
 Michael MOSMAN

Tries Don ROGERS (2)

Kevin STEVENS

Goals Graeme O'GRADY (1)

Royce AYLIFFE (1)

Match Description

Western Suburbs: Full-back: W Smith; three-quarters: D Rogers, R Parker, R Giteau, R Mullins; five-eighth: G O'Grady; half: T Raudonikis (c); forwards: L Boyd, G Foster, J Elford, J Donnelly, J Purcell, P Young

Eastern Suburbs: Full-back: R Fairfax; three-quarters: I Schubert, J Brass (c), M Harris, B Pickett; five-eighth: K Stevens; half: J Mayes; forwards: R Coote, B Reilly, P Fitzgerald, K Jones, E Walters, R Ayliffe **Referee: J Danzey (Rugby League Week 21st March 1976)**

Eastern Suburbs, beaten in all their pre-season Rugby League matches, made a dismal start to their premiership defence when Western Suburbs beat them 8-5 at Lidcombe Oval yesterday. The only disappointment for the surprise winners was that centre Robbie Parker, who overshadowed rival Mark Harris, has a possibly broken hand. Wests were superior throughout the 80 minutes but only took the lead three minutes from full-time when winger Don Rogers dived over for a try. Coach Jack Gibson blamed the heavy 16-6 scrum loss. But that was not the full story. His players looked dangerous when Russell Fairfax used the high kick, but their general play was lifeless. Wests used three newcomers to first grade and all emerged with high ratings. Full-back Wayne Smith and lock Les Boyd, both 19, and 20-year-old prop Peter Young showed money does not produce every good player. "We needed that win badly," Wests' captain Tom Raudonikis said. "We were heading nowhere but down. Now I know we can go on with it. Putting on three inexperienced players was a gamble but they came through well." Brightest feature for Easts was Fairfax's showing. He produced a lot of his old flair after a quiet start. Neither team had scored at half-time, although Wests had done most of the attacking and five-eighth Graeme O'Grady missed with the first two of his four unsuccessful attempts at goal. Early in the second half Harris was able to float a pass as he was tackled to Kevin Stevens, who scored. Prop Royce Ayliffe, who replaced John Brass as kicker, gave Easts a 5-nil lead with his conversion. O'Grady narrowed this with a penalty goal midway through the half and then Easts' line was crossed twice in an exciting final 10 minutes. Easts lost young prop Ken Jones and half-back John Mayes through injury – Jones with a broken nose and Mayes with concussion after he had been set up as a human target in a gridiron-type try. **(Sydney Morning Herald 22nd March 1976)**

"Win, win, win," was the shout through Wests' dressing room at Lidcombe as the Magpies warmed up before the Easts' game. On the field they remembered the call right to the final minute as they grafted to a surprise 8-5 win over Easts. Wests' star forward Geoff Foster, who had an outstanding game to inspire his colleagues in the pack, said later he had never lost hope for a good season. "I know we have been bagged and ridiculed, but pre-season games are not the real thing," said Foster. "We have been experimenting and today it all came off," he added. Foster and skipper Tommy Raudonikis were Wests' stars in a determined all-round display..... **(The Sun 22nd March 1976)**

Notes: Wayne Smith made his debut in this match since John Dorahy broke an ankle in the pre-season. Les Boyd also debuted after powerhouse pre-season performances. Donnelly and Foster were dominant in a massive defensive effort which saw the score 0-0 at half-time. Les Boyd had a blinder while Tom Raudonikis stamped his authority. John Purcell won the scrums 16-6 and Wests used the glut of possession well to score a big upset. Robbie Parker finished with a possible broken hand.