



1972 Round 1 Sunday 26th March Sports Ground



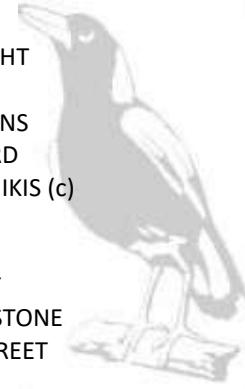
Balmain 15

Michael ROSS
 Paul CROSS
 Geoff STARLING
 Terry RYAN
 Mal McMARTIN
 Tim MURPHY
 Alan TILBROOK
 John SPENCER (c)
 Terry CROSS
 Greg FRYER
 Barry McTAGGART
 Dick JEFFERY
 Garry LEO
 Bob BOLIN

def.

Western Suburbs 11

Tony FORD
 Don ROGERS
 Stephen KNIGHT
 John ELFORD
 Russell MULLINS
 John HEYWARD
 Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)
 Rod SMITH
 John BAKER
 Barry BRYANT
 Russell JOHNSTONE
 Ken STONESTREET
 John WALKER
 John SHERIDAN



Tries

Paul CROSS
 Tim MURPHY
 John SPENCER

Ken STONESTREET
 Russell MULLINS
 Tony FORD

Goals

Michael ROSS (3)

Tony FORD (1)

Match Description

Western Suburbs: Full-back: A Ford; three-quarters: D Rogers, S Knight, J Elford, R Mullins; five-eighth: J Heyward; half: T Raudonikis (c); forwards: R Smith, J Baker, B Bryant, R Johnstone, K Stonestreet, J Walker

Balmain: Full-back: M Ross; three-quarters: P Cross, T Ryan, G Starling, M McMartin; five-eighth: T Murphy; half: A Tilbrook; forwards: J Spencer (c), T Cross, G Fryer, B McTaggart, D Jeffery, G Leo **Referee: G Bennett (The Sun 24th March 1972)**

A North Sydney supporter (and he should know) summed up proceedings at the Sports Ground yesterday. "It will be the best battle for the wooden spoon we've had for years", he said after watching Balmain fumble their way to a 15-11 win over Wests. A disease seemed to hit the players of both sides and it certainly wasn't catching. Barry McTaggart, Mal McMartin and Paul Cross (Balmain) and Don Rogers and Tom Raudonikis (Wests) were just a few who knocked on with the tryline wide open. Balmain Secretary Kevin Humphreys said: "About the only thing we have to be happy about is we have two points on the board." Coach Leo Nosworthy admitted he was disappointed with his side's effort, but added: "It was our first day game of this year." One door down, a worried Don Parish, Wests' coach, didn't offer any excuses. "There's no excuse for bad football. We missed out on the fundamentals – too many dropped passes and missed tackles," he said. Balmain nearly threw away the game by replacing two fit players – Terry Ryan and McTaggart – in the second half. The Tigers were forced to play with 12 men for the last 12 minutes when the replacement for McTaggart, Bob Bolin, went off with a broken rib. And it was in this period captain John Spencer raced through several weak tackles to notch the match-winning try. A vital factor in Balmain's win was the penalty count, which finished 18-7 in the Tigers' favour. And one Wests' player conceded eight of them. At half-time Wests led 8-4 but top tackler John Baker didn't return after the break, because of a bruised shoulder, and his defence was sorely missed. **(The Sun 27th March 1972)**

... Time and again, players on both teams lost the ball near or over the line, or spilled passes with tryline beckoning and no defence in sight. Wests led for most of the match. They had an 8-4 advantage at half-time, having scored two tries to none. Fullback Ford scored the opening try when he backed up outside winger Russell Mullins and skirted the sketched Balmain defence to touch down in the corner. Centre John Elford and lock Rod Smith combined brilliantly to send Mullins over for the second try 14 minutes before half-time. Wests' centre Stephen Knight was lying injured on the ground when rival centres Trevor Ryan and Geoff Starling sent five-eighth Jim Murphy over for Balmain's first try two minutes into the second half. Starling and full-back Ross did the spadework for Balmain's second try by winger Paul Cross midway through the second half. Wests regained the lead when hooker Ken Stonestreet barged over in the corner to give his team an 11-10 advantage with 17 minutes to go. Lock Spencer barged through a ruck close to the line to score Balmain's winning try. **(Daily Telegraph 27th March 1972)**

Notes: The first game of the season was a very scrappy affair with numerous dropped passes and missed tackles, with commentators saying they couldn't remember so many tries being "murdered" in the course of a match. Wests led for 73 minutes until Balmain Captain, John Spencer, barged over for a converted try. Wests had to battle against a high 18-7 penalty count and also lost hard-tackling second-rower John Baker at half-time, replaced by newcomer John Sheridan. The match also marked the debut of ex-Union and Manly International Stephen Knight, who was injured a couple of times. Sensationally, new recruit, Olaf Prattl (ex-Balmain), an expensive buy for the club, was dropped for this match for not attending Friday training.