



1997 Round 15 Saturday 5th July Parramatta Stadium



Parramatta 20

Paul CARIGE
 Ian HERRON
 Nathan BARNES
 Stuart KELLY
 Steve COLLINS
 Jason BELL
 John SIMON
 Jason SMITH
 Jarrod McCRACKEN
 Justin MORGAN
 Dean PAY (c)
 Aaron RAPER
 Karl LOVELL
 Brett HORSNELL
 Darren PETTET
 Eparama NAVALE
 Troy CAMPBELL

def.

Western Suburbs 18

Andrew LEEDS
 Darren WILLIS
 Kevin McGUINNESS
 Ken McGUINNESS
 Brett HODGSON
 Adam DOYLE
 Steve GEORGALLIS
 Paul LANGMACK (c)
 Bill DUNN
 Damian KENNEDY
 Harvey HOWARD
 Ciriaco MESCIA
 John SKANDALIS
 Des HASLER
 Shane MILLARD
 Darren CAPOVILLA



Tries

Eparama NAVALE (3)
 Karl LOVELL
 Steve COLLINS

Paul LANGMACK
 Adam DOYLE
 Damian KENNEDY

Goals

Andrew LEEDS (3)

Match Description

Western Suburbs: Full-back: A Leeds; three-quarters: D Willis, Ken McGuinness, Kevin McGuinness; B Hodgson; five-eighth: A Doyle; half: S Georgallis; forwards: P Langmack (c), D Kennedy, B Dunn, H Howard, C Mescia, J Skandalis

Parramatta: Full-back: P Carige; three-quarters: I Herron, N Barnes, S Kelly, S Collins; five-eighth: J Bell; half: J Simon; forwards: J Smith, J McCracken, J Morgan, D Pay (c), A Raper, K Lovell **Referee: M Hewitt (Big League 5th July 1997)**

A little-known Fijian winger sparked Parramatta to their 9th successive win yesterday as the team, earlier branded \$9 million flops, stamped themselves as genuine premiership contenders. Eparama Navale scored three tries as a replacement as Parramatta shaded rivals Wests 20-18 in a thriller in front of a big Saturday crowd at Parramatta Stadium. A newcomer to first grade football, Navale received the SOS from the interchange bench when regular winger Ian Herron tore a hamstring early in the match. He made the most of his chances, scoring three tries, two of which were the result of his phenomenal strength. Navale is officially the strongest man in the Parramatta club, having won a special competition for players of all grades at the Eels' training base at Baulkham Hills. Yesterday's result in Parramatta's favour will look good in the history books, but the team's first half performance was probably their worst of the year. The Magpies played all over them to lead 12-8 at half time, but the real Parramatta returned for the second session and showed their class. After scoring a brilliant third-minute drive through prop Karl Lovell, the Eels slipped into bad habits and at times barely looked better than a blue and gold rabble. Wests looked highly likely to inflict the first loss on Parra in nine starts but it was a completely different story in the second half. John Simon and Jason Bell were suddenly in the thick of the action, making breaks and sending their supports into gaps with clever passes. Parramatta controlled the ball beautifully, snuffing out Wests' early momentum, and the points flowed at a comfortable rate for the Eels to lead 20-12 with 15 minutes to play. But the Magpies are never beaten and they launched a trademark fightback which resulted in a converted try by second rower Damian Kennedy, which reduced Parra's lead to just two points with three minutes to play. To the relief of most of the crowd of 15,372, the Eels held on and earned praise from coach Brian Smith for the manner in which they lifted their intensity after half time. The Eels scored five tries to three and failed to land a goal. Coach Smith revealed that his second-choice kickers Simon, deputising for the injured Herron, had a sore toe and probably should not have been given the job. The coach said Stuart Kelly and Dean Pay would be tested as potential kickers before his team's next outing against Newcastle. For the winners, Jarrod McCracken, Justin Morgan and Paul Carige were best while the Magpies got tremendous value from Harvey Howard, Bill Dunn, Damian Kennedy and Andrew Leeds. **(The Sunday Telegraph 6th July 1997)**

Notes: This was a very hard-fought game, where Wests were the better team in the first half, led at half-time, but couldn't hold off Parramatta in the second half. When Damian Kennedy scored a converted try three minutes from the end, Wests were down only 20-18 and still a chance. Two disallowed tries in the first half were a decisive blow. Harvey Howard, Bill Dunn and Andrew Leeds were the best for Wests.