



1980 Round 18 Saturday 2nd August Lidcombe Oval



Western Suburbs 15

def.

St George 10

Wayne SMITH
 John RIBOT
 Jim LEIS
 Ron GITEAU
 Warren BOLAND (c)
 Terry LAMB
 Alan NEIL
 Ken HEY
 Paul MERLO
 Bob COOPER
 John DONNELLY
 Jack JEFFRIES
 Tom ARBER

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

Brian JOHNSON
 Michael SORRIDIMI
 Robert FINCH
 Brian JOHNSTON
 Philip GRAHAM
 Tony TRUDGETT
 Steve MORRIS
 Grahame BUCKLEY
 Rod REDDY
 Graeme WYNN
 Craig YOUNG (c)
 John DOWLING
 John JANSEN



Tries

Alan NEIL
 Jim LEIS

Brian JOHNSTON
 Grahame BUCKLEY

Goals

Ron GITEAU (4)
 Terry LAMB (1) Field Goal

Graeme WYNN (2)

Match Description

St George: Full-back: B Johnson; three-quarters: P Graham, B Johnston, R Finch, M Sorridini; five-eighth: T Trudgett; half: S Morris; forwards: G Buckley, R Reddy, G Wynn, C Young (c), J Dowling, J Jansen

Western Suburbs: Full-back: W Smith; three-quarters: J Ribot, R Giteau, J Leis, W Boland (c); five-eighth: T Lamb; half: A Neil; forwards: K Hey, R Cooper, P Merlo, J Donnelly, J Jeffries, T Arber **Referee: J Danzey (The Sun 4th August 1980)**

Western Suburbs, the self-styled battlers of the Rugby League Premiership, are deservedly on top of the table after their magnificent 15-10 win over St George at Lidcombe Oval yesterday. Playing a man short for the last 27 minutes after Paul Merlo was sent off, Wests threw the competition wide open with their inspired win. Merlo was ordered off in the 53rd minute and will face the judiciary committee tomorrow night. He has been charged by referee Jack Danzey with a "head-high tackle" – the second time this season he has been ordered off against St George. Wests led 9-7 when Merlo went but, 27 seconds later, before the second-rower had even made the dressing room, Saints scored. St George swept into the attack, worked the blind side and lock Grahame Buckley dived over. The try lifted St George to a 10-9 lead. Like many in the crowd of 17,492, I thought it was the beginning of the end for Wests. But the 12 players left on the field did not share the common thought. With tremendous fighting qualities, Wests refused to knuckle under and gradually took control, mounting a series of raids that had Saints in desperate trouble. Eleven minutes from the end, the break came. Jack Jeffries, blood oozing down the side of his face, fired a super pass to half-back Alan Neil, who cut between two Saints' players to touch down. There were still 11 minutes to play and the tension was immense as Saints desperately tried to fight their way back into the game. But Wests wouldn't let them in. Great defence and some intelligent kicking kept Saints pinned in their own half. Wests' coach Roy Masters labelled his team's performance as one of the most courageous efforts he had seen. It was a win built on courage but executed by some splendid football and Jack Jeffries' 17-8 domination of the scrums. Four times Wests' attack had St George on the ropes. And four times Wests failed to score. Two of the lost chances were in the first half and although Wests led 7-5 at half-time, it could easily have been 17-5. Back in the competition lead, they must surely be the Rugby League success story of 1980 – and it's not over yet. If ever I have seen a future international, it is five-eighth Terry Lamb. He is a dynamic youngster, a super opportunist, strong tackler and a classy team player. His combination with half-back Alan Neil is indeed a match-winner. Lamb made several decisive bursts yesterday, slicing the defence with his brisk acceleration and generally positioning a supporting player. He kicked a field goal three and a half minutes from the finish that ensured Wests would not be beaten. Saints have problems and the furrows on coach Harry Bath's brow were a lot deeper at the end of the match. Some of his key men, notably Rod Reddy, are not firing. Reddy failed to gather a pass thrown towards him four minutes before half-time. The icing on Wests' cake came from the treasurer when he told the club their takings from yesterday's match were \$31,000 from the gate and television. **(Sydney Morning Herald 3rd August 1980)**

Notes: This was a very gutsy win against the co-competition leader. Paul Merlo was sent off early in the second half (ironically John Donnelly thought it was him and started to walk) and St George took the lead and Wests looked gone. However, the 12 man team tackled themselves to a standstill, particularly in the last 15 minutes, for a great win. Jack Jeffries domination of the scrums (16-7) was a major factor in the fightback. It allowed Terry Lamb to be completely dominant and all commentators were now talking of him as a future international. The Neil/ Lamb half combination was being discussed as the best in the world. The form of Donnelly and Arber meant it would be hard for Bruce Gibbs (still nursing a hand injury from an industrial accident) to force his way back into First Grade.