



1996 Round 22 Saturday 31st August Campbelltown Stadium



Western Suburbs 12

def.

Illawarra 8

Andrew LEEDS
 Darren WILLIS
 Paul BELL
 Brandon PEARSON
 Aseri LAING
 Andrew WILLIS
 Willie NEWTON
 Paul LANGMACK (c)
 Damian KENNEDY
 Bill DUNN
 Justin DOOLEY
 Steve GEORGALLIS
 Harvey HOWARD
 Darren CAPOVILLA
 Nathan LAKEMAN
 John SKANDALIS
 Kevin MCGUINNESS

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

Brendon REEVES
 Rod WISHART
 Brett RODWELL
 Paul MCGREGOR
 Wayne CLIFFORD
 Shaun TIMMINS
 Josh WHITE
 Neil PICCINELLI
 Brad MACKAY
 John CROSS
 Darrien DOHERTY
 Brad HEPI
 Darren FRITZ
 Craig SMITH



Tries Willie NEWTON

Wayne CLIFFORD

Goals Andrew LEEDS (4)

Rod WISHART (2)

Match Description

Western Suburbs: Full-back: A Leeds; three-quarters: D Willis, P Bell, B Pearson, A Laing; five-eighth: A Willis; half: W Newton; forwards: P Langmack (c), B Dunn, D Kennedy, J Dooley, S Georgallis, H Howard

Illawarra: Full-back: B Reeves; three-quarters: R Wishart, B Rodwell, P McGregor, W Clifford; five-eighth: S Timmins; half: J White; forwards: N Piccinelli, B Mackay, J Cross, D Doherty, B Hepi, D Fritz **Referee: E Ward (Daily Telegraph September 1st 1996)**

Magpies coach Tommy Raudonikis and his players spent a nervous hour glued to the radio at Wests' league club last night before allowing themselves to celebrate a berth in next week's finals. The Magpies had given themselves every chance of making the final eight with a gutsy 12-8 win over Illawarra on waterlogged Campbelltown Sports Ground yesterday afternoon. Raudonikis then had to wait and hope that Cronulla could knock off Newcastle last night to make the dream a reality. The Sharks did it easy with a 22-0 win and a relieved Raudonikis summed it up in one word: "Sensational". "This is just great for Wests," he said. "Nobody rated us, even last week, but I would not swap my players for anybody. We're going into a new competition next week and the players have another hurdle in ahead of them. They will be ready." The finals berth did not come easily. Wests looked to be down and out after squandering a number of scoring chances with a howling gale at their backs in the first half. In the second stanza, the Steelers had more than 60% of possession and the extraordinary wind advantage but could make little progress on the scoreboard. Wests threw themselves into the fray, repelling wave after wave of Illwarra attack. Hooker turned half-back Steve Georgallis bobbed up all over the park to snuff out promising raids with enthusiastic tackling. His teammates, inspired by his example, produced a tackling performance that had Wests' old-timers shaking their heads in disbelief. "The boys probably had no right to win this one", said veteran hooker Noel Kelly. "They tackled themselves into the ground in the second half, and were never going to be denied. For an old Wests' man like me, it did the heart proud. These guys are a credit to themselves and their district." There were plenty of mistakes throughout the match from both teams but the closeness of the scores and Wests' zeal in defence made it an absorbing contest. In the final analysis, the Steelers probably had too much ball with the wind at their backs in the second half. International Centre Paul McGregor threatened the line time and again with his probing runs out wide but the defence held tight. The small but incredibly vocal crowd of 3,542 cheered every Magpie tackle, especially as the clock wound down in the final stages. "I'm really proud of them all, they tackled their hearts out," said Raudonikis. "The boys showed a ton of character and I thought it was an exceptional effort in very tough conditions. If we can keep up that sort of defence and get our attack right, we are capable of beating anybody." **(The Sunday Telegraph 1st September 1996)**

Notes: Played in abysmal conditions, this was a win full of character. In a courageous second half, running into a strong wind and with only 40% possession, Wests tackled themselves to a standstill, earning high praise from ex-legend Noel Kelly. Willie Newton stepped up after a poor game against Manly, scoring Wests' only try. Steve Georgallis, as hooker, and later half, was purely inspirational, becoming a tackling machine and being emulated by the rest of the team. The win put them in the top eight, to play Cronulla in the Qualifying Final.