

# 1939 80 YEARS AGO DROMANA V RED HILL A MUD FIGHT AT PIER STREET



The 'VFL Record' from 1939

In 1939, DFC was affiliated with the MPFL 'B' Grade competition and the other clubs were Balnarring, Navy, Pearcedale, Rosebud, Frankston, Hastings-Tyabb (combine), Red Hill and Baxter.

Available club records and newspaper reports indicate that the Dromana list in 1939 included such family names as: Guy, Loader, Williams, Griffith ( see below) Gourlay, McLear, McLaren, Hosking, Hazeldine, Pittock, Humphrey, Temby, Aust , Cornish, Brown and MacDougall.

The Round: 15 clash between Dromana and Red Hill was played at the Dromana Oval in early August; and, from all the available information, the playing surface was an absolute bog... 'mud...mud...glorious mud.'

**FLOODS IN VICTORIA.**

—♦—

**Heavy Rain Still Falling.**

MELBOURNE, Aug. 23.—With heavy rain still falling, floods are being experienced in many Victorian centres. Many roads are impassable, families have been isolated and bridges destroyed. In the

**FLOODS IN VICTORIA**

**More Than 50 Persons Homeless**

MELBOURNE, Tuesday.  
More heavy rains have fallen over practically the whole State. Many reservoirs which were almost dry last summer are now full.

The game was a torrid, grubby and slogging affair with Red Hill holding the upper hand in the early stages of the game. It was only the accuracy of Arthur Loader that kept Dromana 'alive and in touch' at half time.

The third quarter saw a form reversal of some magnitude as the Dromana back line 'held sway' and starved Red Hill of opportunities to score.

In the second half, Dromana booted five goals to one and went on to notch an impressive victory despite the foul conditions. The final scores that day were: Dromana 9.4. (58) defeated Red Hill 6.11 ( 47). Arthur Loader booted four goals and was 'the difference' between the two sides in the 'mud fight.'

When the final siren ( it may have been a cow bell in those days) sounded, the football was as 'heavy as a pumpkin' and the players may have looked as though they had spent the afternoon in the famous Black Bog of Tyrone in Ireland.

The mud and slush that day would pale into insignificance of the conditions that some of players that day would face on the battlefields of Europe within a short space of time.

As the history books show, World War: II would bring organized football on the Mornington Peninsula to a 'five-year hiatus' and change the lives of many men who played in the above match at Dromana.

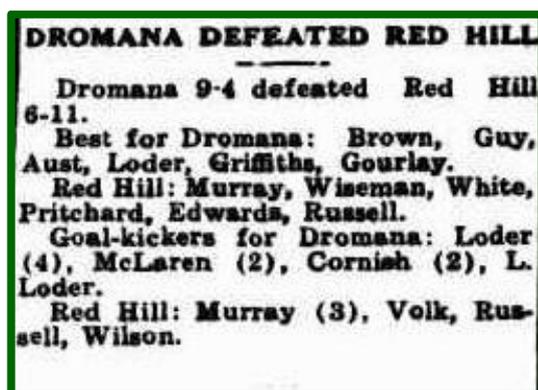
#### **The Quarter by Quarter scores:**

**Dromana:** 1.1 4.2. 7. 4. 9.4 (58)

**Red Hill :** 3.5 5.7 4 5. 6.11 ( 47)

**Goal kickers for Dromana:** Arthur Loader 4, Jack Cornish 2, Pat McLaren 2 and Laurie Loader 1

**Best players for Dromana :** Spencer Brown, Wally Guy, Bert Aust, Arthur Loader, Allan Hosking, Rupert Griffith, and William 'Scotty' Gourlay



Source: 'Standard' Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August 1939. Page: 6.

## **1939- FOOTBALL IN THE SLUSH & MUD**

Generally, modern day footballers seldom see the mud, slush and slippery conditions that players regularly experienced in earlier times.

It wasn't just the Dromana oval that was transformed into a quagmire that season. Newspaper reports show that in **August 1939**, Victoria experienced widespread heavy rainfall(s); and extensive flooding occurred across all

regions of the state. In August 1939, it is known that many 'minor grade' matches were postponed due to the poor state of grounds.

The photo below tries to give some idea to younger readers of the state of football grounds that year. The picture shows Collingwood and St Kilda players battling in the sludge at Victoria Park.

## MAGPIES TROUNCE SAINTS IN MUD



'Mud Pies at Collingwood'

Source: 'Sporting Globe' August 5<sup>th</sup> 1939

SENIOR	
FOOTBALL POSTPONED	
OVALS UNDER WATER	Most of the League clubs also insured against rain.

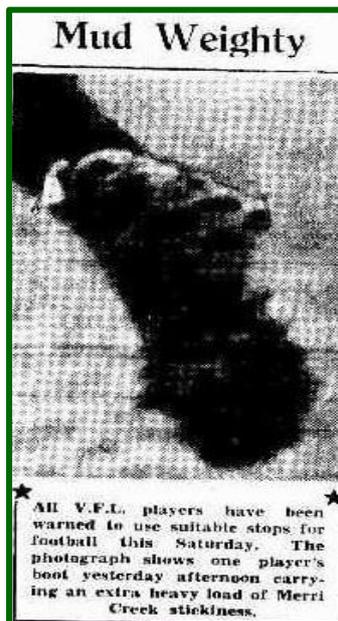
An aspect of wet weather football in the 'olden days, that modern players may not realize, was that often only **one** ball was provided for the match; and it could become so sodden and heavy that long kicking was virtually impossible.

Worse still for the players of earlier ... Sometimes a game of football, played in a 'sea of mud', was followed by a cold shower. The photograph below was taken in August 1939 at the Fitzroy Ground.

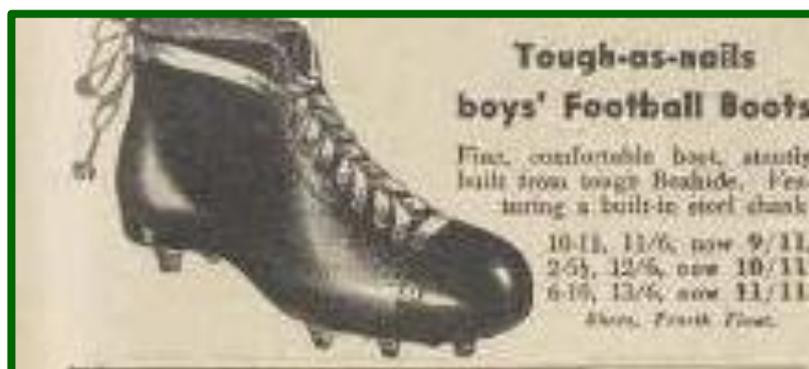


'The Age' Monday August 28<sup>th</sup> 1939. Page: 6

The photo of mud-caked football boots (below) was taken in early September 1939; and depicts how players were warned by the VFL to wear long stops .



Source: 'The Age' September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939. Page: 5



Long leather stops were essential on muddy grounds.  
'Tough-as-nails football boots'  
Source: 'Australian Women's Weekly' June 8th 1940: Page: 21

### FOOTNOTES:

1. Four weeks later Red Hill turned the tables and defeated Dromana in the MPFL First-Semi Final at Sorrento by 10 points.
2. Balnarring FC won the MPFL pennant that season (by defeating Navy).
3. According to the DFNC records, Bert Aust played 238 games, Rupert Griffith (185), Wally Guy (182), Alan Hosking (137) and Vern Humphrey played 89 senior games for DFNC in that era.



Bert Aust



Wally Guy

4. The mud covered surfaces (as shown above) are rare these days because of improved drainage, infrastructure and maintenance. A good deal of money and effort have been spent in up-grading the Dromana Oval over the years.
5. Drainage at Pier Street has been improved and allows water, even after heaviest of downpours, to disperse quickly.
6. Some year ago drought resistant, grass was sown on the Dromana ground. Opinion is divided about the wisdom and effectiveness of that initiative. In the warmer months of the year, the oval is a verdant green while the playing surface in the colder months is unsatisfactory.
7. Most locals would agree that the township badly needs another oval to serve the purpose(s) of the community. Endless words have been bandied regarding another venue for sport but, as yet, a new oval remains a 'pipe-dream.'
8. The wooden fence, of earlier times, has been replaced with a wire-mesh fence; and the around-the-ground lighting has been upgraded to the point where junior and women's night football matches have been played on the oval.
9. The age-old problem of 'worn out', furrowed and unsafe goal squares has been recently solved with the introduction of 'synthetic grass.' In 1939, goal post padding was unheard of in football; however today Dromana ( and all football grounds) have protective pads on all posts to prevent possible injury to players.

10. In 1939, 'The Argus' published the football results from the Peninsula League every Monday; and the local papers published the match details and 'A' and 'B' Grade ladders on Fridays.

**PENINSULA LEAGUE**

MORNINGTON — Football on the Peninsula began on Saturday with B grade fixtures. The A grade will begin on Saturday. Seven teams—Mornington, Frankston, Naval Depot, Hastings-Tyabb, Sorrento, Somerville, and Seaford-Carrum—will compete in what promises to be an even competition. Mornington, Frankston, Sorrento, and Naval Depot have playing coaches. B Grade results—Dromana, 8—17, d Baxter, 4—11; Frankston, 21—27, d Balnarring, 6—7; Red Hill, 13—19, d Hastings-Tyabb, 10—22. For Red Hill F. Vold kicked 8 goals.

**POSITIONS OF CLUBS.**

**A GRADE.**

	P.	W.	L.	Pts.
Frankston .. . . .	8	7	1	28
Sorrento .. . . .	8	6	2	24
Mornington .. . . .	8	5	3	20
Hastings-Tyabb .. . .	7	4	3	16
Naval Depot .. . . .	8	4	4	16
Somerville .. . . .	7	2	6	8
Seaford-Carrum .. . .	8	0	8	0

**B GRADE.**

Balnarring .. . . .	8	7	2	28
Naval Depot .. . . .	8	6	2	24
Pearcedale .. . . .	8	6	3	24
Red Hill .. . . .	9	5	4	20
Rosebud .. . . .	10	5	5	20
Frankston .. . . .	9	4	5	16
Dromana .. . . .	9	4	5	16
Hastings-Tyabb .. . .	9	2	7	8
Baxter .. . . .	9	1	7	4

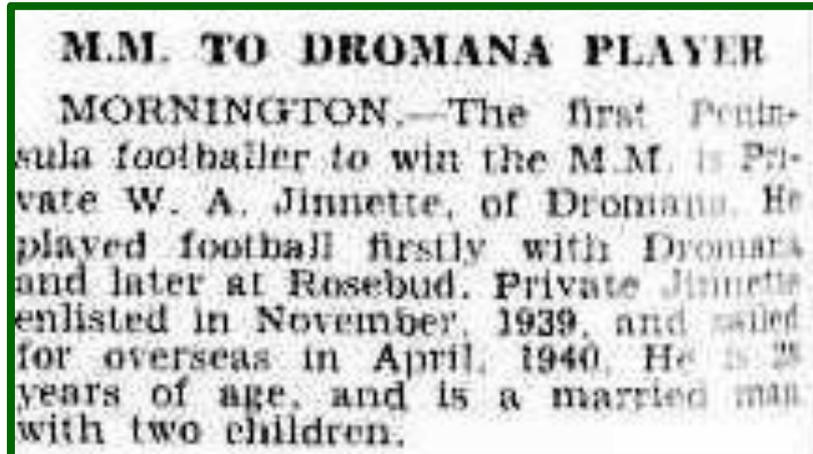
The Ladders – Friday July 7<sup>th</sup> 1939 from the Frankston Standard newspaper.

## **1939- DROMANA PLAYERS ENLISTED FOR MILITARY SERVICE**

Younger readers may be interested to know that in August 1939, Adolf Hitler's troops began their push into Poland and the dark shadow of war fell across Europe. Within a few months (of the above match) the Australian nation was on a war footing.

It is known, that from the above team, Bert Aust, Elgar Pittock, Vern Humphrey, William Gourlay and Vin Hazeldine, served in the Army during World War II; and Rupert Griffith and Spencer Brown enlisted in the RAAF. Reg Birch, also a well-known player in the district, served overseas during WW: II

In 1939, another footballer from Dromana FC, William Alexander Jinnette, enlisted in the Army; and was to be awarded the Military Medal for his brave deeds at the Battle of Bardia (Libya) in 1941. The name 'Jinnette' name appears in match reports in the period 1934-36. William also played football with Rosebud.



'The Age' Saturday 12 April 1941. Page: 8

## **IN APPRECIATION**

Thanks to Brian Griffith for his kind assistance regarding some of the local players of the era. Younger readers may be unaware that Brian played 193 games for Dromana and was the Senior XVIII coach in 1962. Brian made a lasting contribution to the club over many years and DFNC is appreciative of his loyalty and continued support.

### **REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION:**

Sources: DFNC Records -NLA collections - MPNFL archives .

Article reference: 'A Mud Fight'- 1939 (Ref: 2019/9 )

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