

**1989- 30 YEARS AGO  
A NOTABLE WIN AT BONBEACH  
&  
JEFF HILTON- AN EMERGING STAR  
(Ref: 2019/17)**



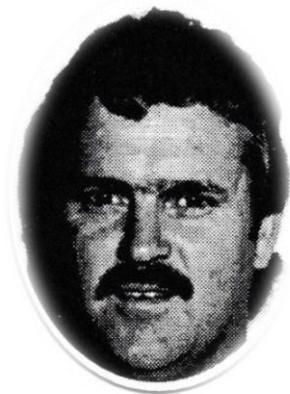
Time flies when you're having fun and football clubs are no exception. Thirty years ago, these events took place at our club and in local football.

- In 1989, John Joyce was appointed coach and his brother, Graham, crossed from South Wantirna to play with Dromana.
- The club also recruited Bill Theoharris from Oakleigh VFA.
- In 1989, Les Rowler was the President, Jackie Ross was Secretary and Bill Wakefield was elected to be Treasurer.
- Young Steve Tobin was 'making a name for himself' in country football.
- Brian Cairns retired from football after sustaining a very serious knee injury.
- Adrian Burns was cleared to Essendon . Adrian went onto play onto play with St Kilda in 1994.
- Jeff Hilton was selected in the 1989 Caltex Country Championships.
- Champion defender Mick James played his 150<sup>th</sup> senior game.
- In 1989, Glenn Kendall won the club's Best and Fairest.
- 17 year old, Trevor Rendall, was selected in the interleague team.
- In 1989, West Gippsland Football League defeated the MPNFL by nearly 10 goals. As an indication of the changing standards of regional football, in 2009 the MPNFL thrashed a similar combine by 15 goals. How things can change in football.

- In 1989, the Third XVIII (Under:17 in those days), coached by Gary Ferguson, played in the final series.
- Graham Stelling, Rhonda Ferguson and Brian Cairns were granted Life Membership of the club.
- The Senior XVIII finished 6<sup>th</sup> on the NFL ladder with 9 wins.

## **DROMANA TRIUMPHS AT BONBEACH**

One of Dromana's best wins in 1989 was over Bonbeach in Round: 8 at home. As mentioned above, **John Joyce** was the coach; and with several fine performances early in the year the club was 'right in the mix' for a finals berth.



**John Joyce- 1989 Coach.**

There is no official team sheet available from that game; but it is believed that the selectors faced a difficult job in the lead-up to that game because eight players were unavailable because of injury and other reasons.

As can be seen from the quarter by quarter scores, Dromana jumped Bonbeach early in the game and led all day. In those days the backline often comprised Mick James, Grant Turnball, Steve Kerr, Bryan Williams and Chris Veale and judging by the Sharks' low score that day, the backs blanketed the opposition in brilliant fashion

In local football, Neil Watson was regarded as an elusive opportunist and against Bonbeach that day he shone with four telling goals.

**Note:** Neil Watson is not related to the DFNC champion forward of that era Phil Watson.

In the history of DFNC , very few words have been written about Graham Joyce but, in his time at the club, he was a hard running , versatile and robust player who could play forward , midfield or, 'at a pinch' hold down a half back flank. Graham played only 33 games with DFNC in 1989-90 but was regarded very highly by his team mates and club officials.

With that victory over Bonbeach, Dromana hovered on the fifth rung on the ladder. Despite promising early form, the team could only manage nine wins and missed a berth in the Final Four that season. John Joyce recalled ...

*“We had some really big wins and we lost four games by under a goal so we were a little unlucky not to play in the finals.”*

The scores were:

- **Dromana : 7.5 11.9 14.13. 18.16 (124)**
- **Bonbeach: 0.4 3.5 5.11 7.14 (56)**
- **Goals :** Watson 4 Hilton 3 Kendall 3 Smith 3 Fowler Whitwam Rose Thomas and Theoharris
- **Best Players:** Only three players were listed in the club’s best players that day, they were: Kendall, Theoharris and Jacobson.

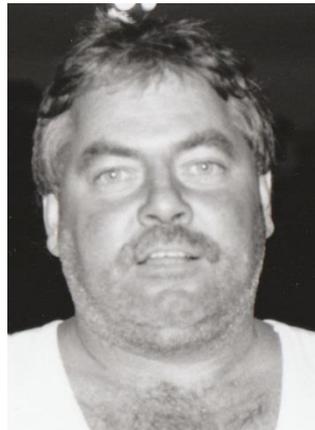
## **GLENN KENDALL- ONE OF THE GREATS**



Glenn Kendall, who was named as Dromana’s best player that day, won the club’s Best and Fairest award that year and was drafted to **St Kilda** the following season. As mentioned previously on this website, Glenn was one of the best junior footballers to play at Pier Street; and the honour boards, around the clubroom, testify to his marked ability as a youngster.

From his very first senior match with DFNC in 1985, Glenn was a ‘force to be reckoned with’ in local football. He played 139 senior games with DFNC and won four Best and Fairest awards (1985-86-88 and 89) . On his return from St Kilda, via Sandringham ( VFA) and Seaford (MPNFL), he coached the club for two seasons in 1994-95; Glen was named on the half back flank in the Team of the Era (1945-2015).

## **MARTY FOWLER –A STAR OF THAT ERA**



The Fowler' (mentioned in the above match review ) is 'Marty' who is the father of current senior player Sam. Mark 'Marty' Fowler, who always wore Number: 19 at DFC, started his football with Rosebud juniors, and later starred as a rover with Sorrento

Marty trained at VFL level as a teenager and was a star rover in MPNFL football. He was cleared to DFC in 1987 and he went onto play 76 senior games; and later became a mainstay of the Reserves XVIII as captain, assistant coach and selector.

In 2001, a special DFC tribute 'roast' was held to celebrate his 200<sup>th</sup> club game; and he was awarded Life Membership in 2003. Marty was selected in the DFC's Team of the Decade (1986-1995). Marty's brother, Darrell, (Number: 26) was also a talented, fearless and dogged footballer who played 49 senior games with Dromana in that era.

Marty's other son, Jack , is also a most talented sportsman and is currently playing VCA Senior Grade cricket for Hawthorn-Kingston CC .



**Marty Fowler's son, Sam, in action with the Dandenong Stingrays.**

**Note:** Marty is not related to the late Gary 'Chooka' Fowler who played with DFNC and is often mentioned in match reports of that period of club history.

## **AN EMERGING STAR - JEFF HILTON**



In that win at Bonbeach, teenager Jeff Hilton kicked three goals and gave an early indication of his ability at senior level. Jeff's brother, Greg, was a well-known personality in Mornington Peninsula cricket and football circles, and played, and coached at DFNC.



**Jeff Hilton's brother Greg also played with Dromana Football Club**

Like Glenn Kendall ( see above), Jeff Hilton starred in school football; and most people, who saw the young blonde haired student, dominating lunch time matches at Dromana State School knew that he was destined for greater things. Jeff was a natural athlete with extraordinary hand-eye coordination and physical strength. Most observers would agree that Jeff was virtually peerless at all levels of junior football ( i.e. MPJFL).

Jeff made his senior debut for DFNC in 1988 and played a total of 34 games ( in two stints) at Dromana. It was not surprising that AFL clubs were attracted by his distinctive style and flair and he was recruited to St Kilda in 1991.



Jeff made his debut for the Saints in Round:11 in 1991 against Hawthorn. He was just 19 years of age and impressed all onlookers with 18 possessions ( 14 kicks and 4 handballs), three strong tackles and one goal. It was indeed a striking debut in a team that boasted such household names as :Nicky Winmar, Tony Lockett, Nathan Burke and Danny Frawley. St Kilda downed the Hawks by 26 points on that occasion.

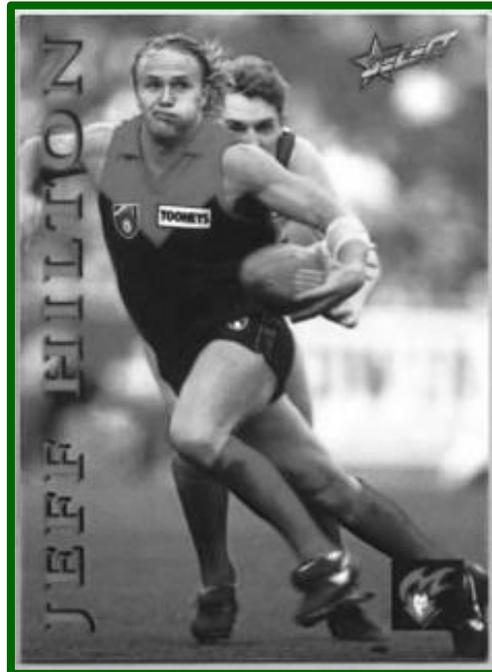
GEORGIO, John		5/10/75	180	80.0	—	—	—	—	Parkmore
GRANT, David	1984	7/8/66	182	85.0	5	141	0	65	City South (Tas.)
GREIG, Dean	1991	31/10/68	183	96.0	5	10	1	1	G Wav/Haw/Camb
HARVEY, Robert	1988	21/8/71	182	84.0	5	62	1	46	Seaford
HILTON, Jeff	1991	27/5/72	180	87.0	—	5	—	6	Dromana
KICKETT, Dale	1990	4/5/68	179	68.0	3	20	4	17	Clare/Fitz/WCE
LOCKETT, Anthony	1983	9/3/66	190	110.0	5	146	23	680	North Ballarat
LOEWE, Stewart	1986	23/5/68	193	108.0	5	123	6	153	Mt. Eliza
MALONE, Robert		4/5/70	182	95.0	—	—	—	—	Claremont

**Jeff Hilton's name is to be found amid three former giants of the St Kilda Football Club- Robert Harvey, Tony Lockett and Stewart Loewe. Source: 'AFL Record'- 1992.**

After an imposing start to his league, Jeff's two seasons at St Kilda realized only six senior matches; and in at the end of 1992 he was crossed Melbourne via the National Draft at pick 99.

Neil Balme, who was the coach at Melbourne in that period, 'liked what he saw' in the golden-haired recruit. In his first game with Demons, Jeff booted three goals and 'gave off' three effective handballs . He looked accomplished and composed on that occasion; and he went on to play 43 games and kick a total of 23 goals with Melbourne FC.

Season 1995 seems to have Jeff's best year at AFL level as he played 19 games and polled five votes in the Brownlow Medal. Only Jim Stynes ( 15 votes ), Gary Lyon ( 9 votes ), David Neitz ( 8 votes ) and Shaun Smith (7 votes ) collected more votes for the Demons' that year. It was a notable achievement in his career and underlined his vast potential in AFL football.



However, Jeff's time at Melbourne was perplexing; and in 1996 he played just five games. Jeff's last AFL game was against North Melbourne at the MCG; and it was a most 'forgettable match' for the Melbourne fans as the Kangaroos demolished the Redlegs by 113 points. Sadly, Jeff's AFL career ended on a controversial note...

***“ Despite showing glimpses of brilliance he could never cement a permanent place in the Melbourne line-up and left at the end of 1996. Hilton later claimed that he had sought a release from the last year of his contract to join Footscray during the trade period, and that a swap had been arranged for Bulldog Darryl Griffin before Footscray's board overruled their football department and vetoed the trade. Hilton was then delisted by the Demons.” Source: 'Demonwiki'***

Jeff Hilton was 24 years and 60 days when he departed company with Melbourne. In all, he had played 49 senior AFL games ( 6 games with St Kilda and 43 with Melbourne) and booted a total of 29 goals.

A statistic that has been ignored regarding Jeff's league career was that he averaged 5.08 handballs per game (with a game high of eleven at Geelong in Round:1 1995). It should be remembered that it was in an period when handball was used less as an 'attacking weapon' that in today's football.

As a comparison at Melbourne in that era : Alistair Clarkson averaged 5.15 handballs across his entire AFL career, Jim Stynes ( 6.60), Jeff Farmer ( 3.57), David Neitz (2.73), Steven Tingay ( 5.85) and Todd Viney (8.36). Jeff's statistics in that aspect of AFL football , supports the claim that he was an unselfish and team-orientated footballer.

During his league career, Jeff was reported on three occasions; and his AFL Tribunal record is as shown in the table below...

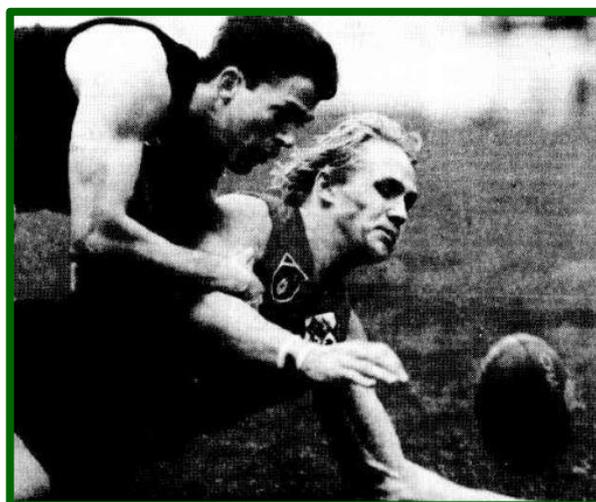
MATCH DETAILS	CHARGE	TRIBUNAL PENALTY
Round 9-1995 v Collingwood	Striking	3 Match Suspension
Round: 3 1996 St Kilda	Wrestling	\$2000 fine
Round: 15 1996 V Richmond	Striking	Not Guilty

Following his departure from Melbourne FC, Jeff crossed the Nullabor and played football with Peel Thunder in the WAFL. In 1998 Jeff 'returned home' and played 10 games with Dromana; and then he was cleared to Rye FC where, despite debilitating injuries, showed patches of sheer brilliance.

In summary, Jeff Hilton is best remembered for :

- His unbounded potential and utter dominance in junior ranks.
- His unique personality and 'laid back' approach to life and sport.
- His creative team play and high-level ball skills.
- His battle to overcome chronic injuries throughout his AFL career.

Jeff was selected on the half-forward flank in DFNC Team of the Decade (1986-1995).



Jeff Hilton at Melbourne in 1994

## **AN ARTICLE , ABOUT JEFF HILTON, AS PUBLISHED ON THE 'COODABEEN CHAMPIONS' WEBSITE**

The following article, regarding Jeff Hilton, was found on a website entitled 'Coodabeen Champions' and was posted in July 2000. The author is not stated but his/her admiration for Jeff, as a footballer, is clearly evident. The commentary is also a good summary of Jeff's undoubted talent; and will give younger readers an insight into his inimitable style on a football field.

*" There's a long history of footballers who are keen surfies. Players find any excuse to drag on the wetsuit, wax down the plank and hit old briny. The best known wave rider of recent times is former West Coast and Melbourne star Craig Turley, runner up to Jim Stynes in the 1991 Brownlow Medal. Turley retired in 1997 to search the world for ultimate swells.*

*Other player-surfers include Tony Modra and Chris Mainwaring and David Spriggs and Jess Sinclair and Richard Osborne. From appearances possibly Daniel Chick. While he may never have strapped on a leg rope, a bloke that had the classic malibu look with long fair hair and a bit of a tan was Jeff Hilton. Appropriate that he started at St Kilda, a club with a tradition of blonds. Because Hilton was drafted from Dromana, he may well have pipelined with the best of them.*

*Jeffy played his first game with the Saints in 1991. He showed a maturity beyond his 19 years. A confidence and a willingness to put himself in. The Hil man was in and out of the seniors during his first season. Finished with 5 games for 6 goals. 1992 was a consolidating year. He played mostly in the seconds. Called up for a single game in the ones. At the end of the year a total of 6. JH was then secured by Melbourne with 1992 national draft pick 99. A bargain. Over the pre-season he got himself into the top shape of Mark Occhilupo when the legend made his comeback to international surfing.*

*Hilton spent some time finding his sea legs through the seconds. But he saw corduroy to the horizon through 1994. His game in round 1 was the biggest thing since Nat Young's world title. During the merciless walloping of Geelong, Jeff kicked 3 goals. One was a blaster of a kick from 50. Another a clever snap from the boundary. He was a reliable single goaler in the round 21 game against*

*Collingwood that the Pies won 13.14 to 9.10. Over the high scoring round 24 exchange with the Swans at the SCG, Hilton set up 3 for Schwarz. One consisted of dodging two opponents and popping a handpass over to the big number 5 on his own in the square. Plus Hilton posted a major halfway through the last term. Demons home 27.5 to 18.13.*

*Jeffy boy continued to ride the crest of a wave into 1995. Round 7 versus Brisbane at the MCG. In a low scoring encounter, Hilton played like 'skill' was his middle name. He changed the complexion of the game by recording three elegant sixers as well as giving one away to Neitz. Demons by 5 points, 12.10 to 10.15. Round 11 was 120 physical minutes with Carlton. Hilton hung five on the head of Dean Rice who had to leave the ground. The Dees lost the match but won the fights. Fortunately, Hilts avoided a report. Round 18. Essendon at the G. Jeffo was the highest goal scorer on the ground with two. His first was reading the ball brilliantly off the pack in the square. Walked in and booted the imperial leather into the upper reaches of the Southern Stand. An easy six pointer. Yet the Dees lost by 33 points.*

*Fast forward to round 1 1996. Melbourne versus Geelong at the MCG. Hilton supplied a goal but the avalanche was in the opposite direction. Ablett kicked 8 and McKinnon 3. Otherwise it was a difficult year for Jeffrey. Charged with trying to put a sleeper hold on Jayson Daniels following round 3. Thereafter a nagging calf injury and a drop in confidence. Hilton found himself in the reserves but encouraged the kids. Unfortunately, he was delisted at the end of '96...*

*Some 50 reserves appearances at two clubs. If he wasn't Murphy the Surfie already, Jeff Hilton had time to get that gorilla grip going."*

## REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION:

Sources: MPNFL Records –Tiger Talk- DFNC Handbook-Personal files- AFL archives.

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