

1904 SAFA Grand Final: Norwood vs. Port Adelaide

Norwood's Amazing Comeback

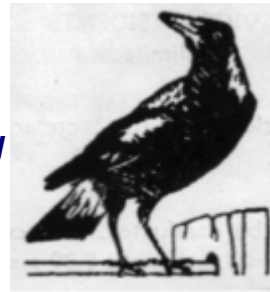
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Norwood



9.8 (62)

Port Adelaide



8.10 (58)

defeated

Original Match Report from 'the Adelaide Observer'

The deciding match of the year took place on the Jubilee Oval, when the largest attendance of the year assembled.

There were about 11,000 people present, and the gate returned £285. It was a test which bore out the decision on show day that the place without some improvements cannot accommodate such crowds. Hundreds around the fence could not have been able to see the game - that was borne out by the fact that in the last quarter, when excitement was intense, the crowd encroached right into the playing arena, and stopped the game.

The police protection was miserably inadequate. There were perhaps 3 policemen and a trooper in the ring, and an annoying incident took place just a couple of minutes before time, when the spectators swarmed onto the oval, and the game was stopped while players and umpire persuaded them to retire; a policeman assisted. There was no semblance of any rough disturbance, but simply in their uncontrollable excitement, and in their desire to see the game finish the people encroached further and further until they broke bounds. The umpire stopped the play, and then of course the crowd swarmed the place. However, the appeals of players on both sides sent them back to the asphalt. The arrangements for coping with a big crowd were totally insufficient. Every gate was jammed, and hundreds of people walked from North Terrace to the lower level to find that, so dense was the throng at the small entrance, they had to retrace their steps to North Terrace, and then go down Frome Road to the side

gateway. It is a pity these things happened, because the game itself was an historic one.

Port Adelaide and Norwood have played off many times for the premierships. There is no more popular game in all South Australia than a meeting of these clubs when they are on an equality, and on Saturday they were. Each had won 10 matches, lost 2, and drawn 1 - the tie between themselves. Port had been spelling since the holiday, but Norwood had defeated in turn North Adelaide and South Adelaide. On paper, the seashiders looked the more likely to win, and the odds were slightly on them, but it was not forgotten that, although Norwood had not beaten Port for 2 years, 14 years had elapsed since the black-and-whites had defeated the red-and-blues in a final go, and that the play-off matches which the eastern men had lost in 27 years would not take more than 1 count of the fingers of 1 hand. "It is asking a lot," said Newland, the Norwood skipper, "to beat the 3 clubs with some cripples in the team, but - we'll have a try." The Norwood supporters became hysterical after the game in telling their men what a magnificent effort theirs had been.



J. Fletcher (Port Adelaide), who featured in this match, and later skippered the club.

"We'll win," said Quinn of Port Adelaide, and at three-quarter time, no one doubted his prophecy. Then his side went down before the most wonderful rally seen in South Australia, and by an almost superhuman effort Norwood, who had been under the whip all day, cast off their antagonists like a giant would a child, and when nothing but goals could help them, kicked 6 from 7 shots, and then added 2 minors just to make the result certain.

It was a marvellous recovery, such as has never been seen in Adelaide, and the crowd went almost frantic with excitement. Far away in Norwood, people heard the shouts like the roar of a train in a tunnel or an approaching storm, and knew that the club with its great record had added fresh glory to its laurels.

At the last change, Port led by 8 goals 10 behinds against 3 goals 5 behinds. "All's over!" Even the Norwood supporters said so. The reds had won many matches by a grand finish, but they had been thoroughly beaten all the afternoon by a superior team playing a better game. It was thought that even if they made a rally, it was impossible to so change the position that they could score a goal every 4 minutes. "Look at our men," they said, "their arms are hanging down

from sheer exhaustion." So they were. If ever a game looked over at three quarter time, this one did.

Norwood on their play could not have been expected to gain 1 point on their opponents. The crowd began to move. It was all over. "Stay a minute," said some. "Let's see what Norwood will do." They were off again. Bounced! What was that? A long, running kick from Dawson went straight through. A goal first kick! The crowd stopped. Oh, only a fluke! See Port have it at their end! No! Bahr has picked it up, dashes on with it, collides with Selby, and the Port man lies still. On Bahr goes, crosses the centre line, and passes to H. Miller. His brother is waiting, the ball goes straight to him. He has dropped it, but with a flash he is on to it, through the ruck and has snapped a goal. Two in 4 minutes! What is going to happen? The spectators decide to see the game right out. Selby is carried off the field badly hurt, and Robinson is free (see footnote 1). The Norwood crowd are becoming excited. It is still a long way, but they have gone a third of the journey.

Their men are now playing like a fresh team, with the blood of thoroughbreds. Every one of them responds to Newland's cry for another rally. They follow his desperate play with equal determination and greater skill than any of them have shown before. Cheering rings right around the oval as the reds go forward again, and W.R. Miller from another good shot supplies No. 6. Half the journey! Surely Norwood will never do it. The Port men are flurried and anxious. Then when the reds rush again, Quinn begins to change his places. He had made a mistake in taking Davis and Strawns out of the ruck, and before he gets them back, the damage is done. A couple of minutes later, Robinson gathers the ball in, and from a difficult shot wipes off another 6 points. Only 11 more are wanted, and for the first time victory looks possible. How the crowd does yell. The mound at the northern end is a moving picture of hats, handkerchiefs, and umbrellas as the people stand up and shout out their joy. Strong men with tears streaming down their cheeks and with voices choked with emotion jerk out "We'll win, we'll win!"

But even then it is surely asking Norwood to do too much. No team can keep the dash up. Davis is brought back into the ruck again, but it is too late. Nothing can stop Norwood now. They are playing a superb game, and their passing, although the pace is terrific, is deadly accurate. Davis seizes at the bounce, and from him the ball goes to Tomkins. he could have saved his side with a goal, but Morrison prevents it. L. Hill is off with the ball, and away it goes into goal. "One more, Norwoods." The cry comes from all around. Except the staunch Port supporters, everyone is cheering the reds. Gryst misses a close shot. Then Robinson puts the ball into Dempster's hand's on the line. It is out to the centre in a flash, but Bahr brings it back, and inch by inch, Norwood fight their way to goal. Port defenders are trying to hold out, but the rush has staggered them, and they are broken and dispersed. Right to the goal line Norwood get the ball foot by foot, Webb touches it last, and when the 2 flags go up, the excitement is painful.

Strong men turn away, and calm people shake and go pale. It is impossible to remain silent. Thousands of people are shouting at the players. The northern mound is a struggling mass of excited humanity. Five minutes to go, and Norwood want 4 points. Port are taking advantage of every point. They are beaten, but are fighting for time, and the clock is still in their favour.



Norwood's T. Gibbons, scorer of the game's winning goal.

"Can we do it?" one players says to another, and their supporters scream at them to try. Back into goal again go the reds, and then out again, but Dawson, who with Newland and Miller is heading the attack, gathers the ball in. He did it at Alberton, and drew the match! A man is a football genius who can do it every time. It is a difficult angle, and Davis stops the progress of the leather. Time is flying, and the people are out of hand. They are swarming on to the asphalt, on to the grass, anywhere to see the finish. Out from Davis to the boundary line, but Gibbons marks the ball. It is a more difficult angle than Dawson's, but fortune favours the brave, and with a couple of feet to put the ball through he sends it home. There is no need to wait for the flags, the crowd behind the posts announces that Norwood leads by 2 points, and then the crowd bursts forth into one wild, delirious cry. A couple of minutes to go, but the reds come again, and Webb gets the second minor for the quarter. The people can stand it no longer. The excitement has been too much for them, and they swarm over the grass and stop the play. They are pushed back for 1 more minute's play, which gives Robinson a minor, and then it is over. In a second, the arena is black with people cheering the victors.

It was a fearfully exciting finish, and men and women were hysterical as they applauded the players. Port were naturally disappointed, but they cordially congratulated their opponents. The victors were almost carried to their room, but a passage had to be forced for them, because thousands of people trod on one another, pushed, scrambled and fought to get near to cheer the men as they passed through.

The scene was indescribably exciting. In the dressing room the chief supporters were beyond control with pleasure. The team had done something that eclipsed anything that even the Norwood Club had done before. Mr. Cariss, the umpire, was applauded as he came off, for the strain on him must have been great, and he had done well. Umpire and players were exhausted at the end.

Match Summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Pts
Norwood	1.2	2.4	3.5	9.8	62
Port Adelaide	4.2	5.6	8.10	8.10	58

The Teams: **Norwood** - Bahr, Cowan, Dawson, Gibbons, Gosse, Gryst, Gwynne, L.Hill, R.Hill, Miller (2), Morrison, Newland, Robinson, Smith, Townsend and Webb

Port Adelaide - Ashby, Corston, Davis, Dempster (2), Earle, Fletcher, Gosling, Healey, James, Mack, Moore, Philips, Quinn, Strawns, Selby, Tomkins and Whicker

ATTENDANCE: 11,000 approx. at Jubilee Oval

Footnotes

1. The laws of the game did not allow for the replacement of injured players until 1929.