



1993 Premiership

HOCKEY DONS WIN THE BIG ONE Camberwell overwhelmed in second half blitz.

In today's State League One men's hockey grand final, Doncaster finally delivered the handsome premiership win that had seemed to be theirs from mid-way through a season in which they scored over hundred goals and were clearly the best side in the competition.

In defeating the reigning premier, Camberwell, by four goals to nil this young talented Doncaster side gave the club its first top grade men's flag in its very first appearance in a State League One grand final. The men's two other grand finalists, A and D pennant, completed a magnificent weekend for the club with a pair of 3-0 victories over established hockey power Camberwell.

Quietly elated by his team's performance, coach George Manos was, immediately after the final whistle moved to say "You know they are still two or three years away from their peak". These are ominous words indeed, because it would be hard not to view Doncaster's youthful dominance of both State League and A Pennant as the birth of a dynasty.

That this success has been almost entirely achieved with the club's own players is especially meritorious, with no less than 11 players from the State League squad and twelve from the A Pennant squad coming from the Doncaster Junior Section. Of the four players from the top squads who have not played at the club as juniors, three have been with the club for over five years.

Despite a day of indifferent weather, there was a big crowd on hand to see if Doncaster, in its twentieth season, could break the Camberwell, Waverley premiership alternation which, apart from TEMC's 1987 flag, had reigned supreme for ten years.

Apart from the absence from both sides of World Junior Cup representatives, the appearance of Doncaster skipper and Olympian, Lachlan Elmer, who had been under an injury cloud all week, meant the teams were at full strength.

From the outset Camberwell exploited the seemingly nervous and definitely inexperienced Doncaster side and with international penalty corner specialist, Jay Stacy, in the Camberwell line up, two early penalty corners had Doncaster hearts a fluttering.

However, despite sustaining a broken toe from the first shot of the match, Doncaster goalkeeper Alan Scott began what was to be a splendid day for him as he brought off save after save to wipe out the horror of the semi-final loss to Camberwell. He was greatly assisted by Andrew Hodder's speed from the line which was to prove all day, a very decisive factor in the successful defence of Camberwell's numerous penalty corners.



After a few minutes of nervous survival, Doncaster began to gain some composure and with a surer deep defence, a winning centre half in Hodder, was able to mount some credible forward thrusts.

Just on the five minute mark, somewhat against the run of play, a right side advance saw inside forward James Elmer wriggle free of his cover, and cross the ball to Hiskins close to the left hand post. From the resultant scramble between, Hiskins, Shaw and the opposing 'keeper, the ball squirted out to the right where, James Elmer was on hand to push the ball home from point blank range.

From this set-back, Camberwell's Olympic representatives, Stacey and Wansborough, lifted noticeably and Doncaster's resurgence was momentarily threatened when vice-captain David Shaw was felled by a blow to the head, for which Read of Camberwell was sent off.

Eventually, after intense ministrations by team manager Arthur McCartney, Shaw regained his feet and Doncaster continued to build momentum, but still Camberwell's penalty corner tally continued to mount and the threat of an equaliser hung heavy in the atmosphere.

At the twenty one minute mark, James Elmer was crashed to the ground in the attacking twenty five and the offender took a spell in the sin-bin but unfortunately, the resultant penalty corner did not produce the much needed goal.

Despite an improvement in Doncaster's possession rate, Camberwell still held the edge and attempt to lift his side, Manos replaced eighteen year old Stuart Campbell on the right wing with the experience of Tim Reid and Craig Timothy at left half for the more physical and tighter marking Stuart Todero.

Lachlan Elmer was applying plenty of physical pressure on his Australian teammate and Stacy's interest appeared to be waning. This was never more evident than when Stacy gained a rare break and with only two defenders in the region he was channelled left by Dean Todero. By the time Stacy had found space to shoot, Mathew Woolsey had arrived to limit his options and the seemingly half-hearted shot on goal was well covered by Scott.

Doncaster soaked up everything Camberwell could muster and survived several more penalty corners before going into half time, perhaps a little fortunately, with a valuable one goal lead.

Despite a tight and far from comfortable first half George Manos must have been pleased with his tactics to combat Camberwell's swift counter attacking style. This tactic, in which they draw in the opposition by falling back in numbers and defending at the twenty five yard line, is designed to regain possession and quickly deliver the ball to three deep lying forwards for breakaway field goal attempts.

However, Manos countered by using much the same approach whilst at the same time channelling Camberwell into an almost exclusive right side defensive outlet and with knowledge of the direction of their attack, was more easily able to shut down the deep lying forwards and force Camberwell's mid-field to carry the ball into the Doncaster defensive zone.



With the scent of victory in their nostrils Doncaster opened up much more fluently in the second half. Right winger Reid, despite his limited mobility, was causing the Camberwell defence plenty of problems and just two minutes in, he collected a ball from mid-field and with a superbly weighted pass between two defenders, found the fast-leading James Elmer, in space, deep on the right flank.

With only the goalkeeper to beat Elmer slipped the ball square across the face of goal to an unmarked Hiskins, who emphatically pushed the ball into an unguarded net. The Doncaster crowd erupted as the realisation of a possible victory became a little stronger even though a Camberwell side with its penalty corner conversion potential could not yet be counted out.

Five minutes later, deep lying inside left Lachlan Elmer, in a rare foray forward went close to scoring as Camberwell's relatively slow defence was increasingly drawn up field and beginning to make defensive errors.

Still Camberwell continued to attack and Woolsey and the brothers Todero, Dean and Stuart, were forced to show some uncompromising courage in deep defence. During this period Alan Scott performed unflinchingly in the face of everything Camberwell could throw at him, including a powerful head high flick which he coolly turned aside. Hodder smothered the corner hits and Woolsey, in one heart stopping moment, pulled the ball off the line with Scott beaten.

Camberwell's inability to breach the inspired Doncaster defence eventually saw them crack and as frustrations grew, the unforced errors began to mount and their usual sure ball handling fell away markedly.

With sixteen minutes to play, David Shaw pulled off a brilliant intercept of what should have been a routine clearance from the Camberwell left back, he then sprinted around the defender and pushed the ball flat across goal where Hiskins was once again on hand to flick the ball just out of reach of the despairing dive of the 'keeper.

Chants of "three nil, three nil" echoed around the stadium as it became clear that Camberwell, with heads bowed, were unlikely to recover from this blow.

The Doncaster attacks began to flow, particularly down the left where Hiskins threatened to run riot and drilled one reverse stick flick onto the cross bar and later slipped over in the path of James Elmer shot and stopped it with his back. Jason Manos at right half overcame a nervous first half and was creating plenty of opportunities for Reid and Elmer on the right.

With less than 12 minutes left on the clock, Reid pounced on a smothered clearance from the goal mouth and with barely a back lift rocketed the ball into the roof of the net, thereby driving the final nail into Camberwell's heart.

The only interest in the final period was to deny Camberwell a goal to complete one of the most comprehensive victories in the recent history of State League One grand finals. With the task achieved all that remained was the delirious response to the final whistle.



DONCASTER HOCKEY CLUB

After receiving their medals, the Fairfield Trophy and the pennant for the major premiership and the Pakistan Cup for the minor premiership, the team ran towards the "Doncaster Hill" to share the glorious moment with their supporters and many of the older members in the crowd were reduced to tears.

It was indeed a splendid finale to a splendid season in which the youthful talent, enthusiasm and spirit distilled by George Manos added a new dimension to the competition and gave hockey enthusiasts plenty of exhilarating moments to savour.

This game was won because every member of this squad made a significant contribution and whilst it may seem a touch unfair to single out individuals, it must be noted that Andrew Hodder at centre half, Ossie Scott in goals, full backs Matthew Woolsey and Dean Todero all played at the highest level when the result was most in the balance.

Others to provide strong contributions were forwards James Elmer who supplied the flair, David Shaw the pressure, Jeremy Hiskins the finishing and Tim Reid the inspiration, Lachlan Elmer, only partially fit but was determined to nullify Stacy and succeeded as did Stuart Todero on the dangerous Cashmere. Jason Manos showed enough to give confidence in his future and likewise Campbell.

