

SOUTHPORT RULE AGAIN

by TERRY
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THE Southport Sharks added another piece of silverware to an already bulging trophy cabinet with their sixth Queensland Australian Football League premiership in 10 years at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday.

The Sharks, who have featured in nine grand finals during their stay in the QAFL, held on to score a narrow, yet convincing, victory over arch rivals Morningside, kicking 14-10 (94) to 12-8 (80).

Not only did the Sharks win in the seniors, but they completed their fourth triple crown after victories in the reserves and colts.

The seniors victory reversed last year's result when the Panthers thrashed Southport by 10 goals and continued the remarkable run of captain-coach Cameron O'Brien, who has yet to play in a losing Sharks side.

Close friend

The flag meant a lot to O'Brien, who dedicated the victory to his 'second father' and close friend, loyal Brisbane and Southport supporter Les Don, who died in O'Brien's arms after collapsing during a pre-season trial match at Southport's Fankhauser Reserve in March.

The Sharks waited until the grand final to wear black armbands in a mark of respect and O'Brien later revealed he used notes from Don in his team's build-up.



ABOVE: Winners can smile...the jubilant Southport team after yesterday's victory. BELOW: Captain/coach Cameron O'Brien (left) with veteran rover Jason Cotter.

But as much as O'Brien did it for Don, he also did it for himself, eliminating any self-doubts he may have had over his coaching ability.

And, most importantly, he did it for the club, by far the most successful Gold Coast-based sporting set-up.

"I was worried at the start, but when Morningside got their goals, they had to work hard for them, which was a good sign," said O'Brien, who ignored the discomforts of a bad knee to play a key forward-line role.

Indeed, it was a different Southport side to the one which surrendered by eight goals to Morningside in the second semi-final.

Whereas in that game the Panthers dominated the centre bounces, Southport broke even in this department.

● Continued, Page 43

