

ROY CAZALY

CAZALY, ROY (1893-1963). Footballer, was born on 13 January 1893 at South Melbourne, tenth child of English-born James Cazaly and his wife Elizabeth Jemima, nee McNee, midwife and herbalist from Scotland. James had been a champion oarsman and a physical instructor but had lost his money in the collapse of the land boom and was a labourer when Roy was born. Educated at the Albert Park and Middle Park State schools, Roy was trained athletically by his father and elder brothers in their backyard gymnasium, and starred early at cricket and football. While still in his teens he rowed for South Melbourne in Victorian championships; he also played as a medium left-hand bowler for Port Melbourne Cricket Club. In his youth he worked in a butcher's shop and as a motor mechanic. On 18th October 1913 at Brunswick he married Agnes Murtha.

In 1909-20 Cazaly played for St Kilda Football Club, without pay, winning the club's "best and fairest" award in the last two seasons. In 1921 he transferred to South Melbourne, where he formed "The Terrible Trio" ruck combination with "Skeeter" Fleiter and rover Mark Tandy. Though only 5ft. 11 ins. (181 cm) and 12 ½ stone (79 kg), Cazaly was a brilliant high-mark; he daily practised leaping for a ball suspended from the roof of a shed at his home. He could mark and turn in mid-air, land and in a few strides send forward a long accurate drop-kick or stab-pass. Fleiter's constant cry "Up there Cazaly" was taken up by the crowds. It entered the Australian idiom, was used by infantrymen in North Africa in World War II, and became part of folk-lore.

Cazaly was paid 6 pounds a week by South Melbourne and regularly played for Victoria. A critic eventually described him as the "greatest Australian Rules footballer between the two World Wars". After a year at Minyip as playing coach at 12 pounds a week, he returned to South in 1926-27, then began an extraordinary career as a playing coach with reputedly as many retirements as Nellie Melba. Laurie Nash regarded him as the greatest coach of his experience, the complete player, strategist, and tactician, able to impart his knowledge persuasively, without histrionics. He coached City (Launceston, Tasmania) in 1928-30, North Hobart in 1932-33, South Melbourne in 1937-38, Hawthorn in 1942-43, New Town, Hobart in 1934-36 and 1948-51, and Preston and Camberwell in the Victorian Football Association. His last professional game was with Camberwell when he was 48, but in 1951 when 58 he played in a short veterans' match, then a full game for New Town in which he kicked a goal.

Cazaly was obsessed with sport, the body and physical movement. While with South he had studied, under the club doctor and masseur, muscular anatomy and the treatment of muscular injury, mastering Swedish massage theory and practice. During the Depression, he worked on the waterfront, played with waterside workers in the mid-week competition, and treated muscular injuries at night. In the 1930s he practised Sister Kenny's controversial treatment of poliomyelitis, without charging fees. He developed theories of diet and the "art of breathing", filling his lungs before going for the ball in the belief that oxygen gave him added levitation and energy. A non-smoker and non-drinker, he "dried out" late in the week, sipping only a little water and eating sparingly.

During World War II Cazaly worked at Johns and Waygood and represented fellow employees in negotiations. On moving to Hobart he opened a health clinic, which prospered. On 35 acres (14 ha) at Lenah Valley he bred horses and, with Master Barry, won the first Tasmanian Trotting Championship in 1956. In May 1950 he had stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal Party candidate for Denison for the House of Assembly. His family life was close; he played the piano and they often had sing-songs at night. After a long illness following heart attacks, Cazaly died on 10th October 1963 at Lenah Valley, survived by his wife, a son and four daughters.

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