

# David Cervinski



David Cervinski closes down Damian Mori of Adelaide City in the National Soccer League Grand Final at the Hindmarsh Stadium on 7 May 1995.

## By his friends, team-mates and opponents

I am convinced David Cervinski would have played for Australia if it had not been for the haircut and the moccasins. He had every other attribute needed, linked to a fierce will to win and uncompromising determination to succeed as a player and a human being.



David was born in 1970 to Steve and Wanda Cervinski and began playing football with his Dad as soon as he could walk. He started to play with junior teams at Bell Park and then moved to North Geelong around 1985. He was part of the North Geelong team that won Victorian Under-18s. The complete tactical talk before the final was legendary. 'Must win, must win', by their coach.

He made his debut for North Geelong in the 1980s. He scored in the *Geelong Advertiser* cup for North in 1990. He helped North win promotion to the VPL in 1991, scoring his first goal in a 6–1 win over Caulfield City on 11 August 1991. North won the Victorian Premier League in the first season at that level under Branko Culina. It is still the

only team to do so. David won the Jimmy Rooney medal as the best player in the Grand Final. He went to Melbourne Knights and won the NSL in 1994-95 and 1995-96. He moved to Carlton in 1997 where the team lost to a late Con Boutzianis goal in the Grand Final after finishing second in the league. His next move was to Wollongong where he won the NSL titles again in 1999-2000 and 2000-01. He played one game for Victoria against South Australia in October 1992 and received the Bill Fleming medal in 1993 as the VPL player of the year.

## David Cervinski's career

Date of Birth: 08-Nov-1970

Position: Defender

### Playing Record

Junior Clubs: Bell Park and North Geelong Warriors

1989-1993 – North Geelong Warriors (SL2, SL1, VPL)

1993/4 - Melbourne Knights (NSL)

1994/5 - Melbourne Knights (NSL) 23 app + 0 sub. 3 gls.

1995 - North Geelong Warriors (VPL)

1995/6 - Melbourne Knights (NSL) 31 app + 0 sub. 3 gls.

1996/7 - Melbourne Knights (NSL) 18 app + 0 sub. 0 gls.

1997/8 - Carlton S.C. (NSL) 22 app + 2 sub. 1 gls.

1998/9 - Carlton S.C. (NSL) 22 app + 1 sub. 3 gls.

1999 - Gombak F.C. (Singapore)

1999/00 - Wollongong City (NSL) 35 app. 3 gls.

2000/1 - Wollongong City (NSL) 22 app. 0 gls.

2001/2 - Wollongong City (NSL) 20 app. 0 gls.

2002/3 - Wollongong City (NSL) 23 app. 0 gls.

2003 - Cringila (IPL)

2003/4 - Canterbury-Marrickville (NSWPL) 8 app + 0 sub. 1 gls.

2004 - Cringila (IPL)

2005 – North Geelong, State League 2 champions

2006/7 – North Geelong (VSL1)

## From his friends, team-mates and opponents

These stories are in no particular order and the pictures likewise. It would be an injustice to David to have everything neat and tidy. That was not what mattered to him, but how you did your job on and off the field.



North Geelong Under 18s with Ivan Roso. David centre of front row with a smile on his face.

My first recollections of a young David was when we first met at 1991 pre-season training at Ocean Grove beach. My initial impressions, due to his long fair hair and average touch at the

time, were that he looked nothing like a soccer player but resembled more like someone that had just returned from a surf. How wrong could I have been 5 National championships later. I recall that his performances were always consistent, he was never injured and pretty much played every minute of every match. He was a player that got along with everyone and loved a laugh which we had in spades playing alongside each other and in particular driving to and from matches in Melbourne. In that team we shared a bit of confidence and young arrogance and loved taking the micky out of any pretenders. David in particular backed it up with action on the pitch. As a result everyone got on really well with David. I can't recall anyone ever saying a bad word about David. You got what you saw. Looking forward to having another laugh with him one day.

Robert Palmaricciotti



North Geelong's Victorian Premier League champions in 1992. David in the middle of the front row with his can. Back row, left to right. Steve Horvat, senior, Joe Madunic, Frank Simovic, Steve Horvat, junior, Vinko Saric, Robbie Cosic, Goran Georgievski, Joe Markovac, Robbie Markovac, Adrian Cervinski. Front row: Bogdan Bonk, Slavko Banozic, George Karkaletsis, David Cervinski, Eddie Kuzman, Marijan Vunderl, Mark Wilson, Robert Palmaricciotti. Photo: John Punshon.

I played with David Cervinski during our Premier League Championship season in 1992. He was one of the most tenacious defenders I ever played with. He always gave 150% out on the pitch, he was one defender every team would love to have. I recall coming into the team and being welcomed by David and thinking to myself who is this guy? He was a gentle giant, giant at heart, off the pitch a gentleman and on the pitch, he was ruthless. I can recall the flowing blond locks as he would glide across the pitch jumping up in the air as he most often did winning all the aerial battles. When he tackled, you could hear the tackle, his opponents knew they were in for a hard day when coming up against David. David was of course rewarded soon after that season when Melbourne Knights picked him up and he went on to an illustrious career in the old NSL. David is a true champion and I feel very privileged to have played alongside him.

George Karkaletsis

The roaring sound of a big Bronco arriving on my nature-strip and the deafening horn that followed only meant one thing: the Cervinski boys had arrived to take me to training.

Two brothers, two legends and two completely different players. Adrian, a technician, one of the best goal scorers I have had the privilege to play with and David, the oldest brother, an uncompromising defender with only one thing on his mind—to win! Although not highly technical he possessed attributes that every top-level player has to have. He had the ability to read the play, see the game unfold two steps ahead and this made him one of the best defenders the National League has ever seen. His four National League titles with two different clubs is a testament to that!

So there I was in a car, travelling up the highway with these two legends plus two other young players, Mijo Trupkovic and Ante Deak who were also transferred in the off-season to the Melbourne Knights. Just hearing the way the two brothers would talk to each other made us laugh in the back seat. They were guys who didn't need to tell a joke to be funny. David was direct, would tell you the way it was according to his perception while Adrian was more reserved. I was 19 years old so David's approval meant everything to me. He was a well-respected player in the team, he was a fan favourite and as a goalkeeper, it was my job to keep the ball out of the net. I just didn't want to let him down!

Back in those days, most players worked during the days and then we trained in the evenings. I, on the other hand, was at University. My Uni was in Melbourne so I used to catch a train up in the morning and then return in the afternoon before travelling back up the highway to train.

David was the leader of the 'Geelong shuttle bus' and always had a comment on the clothes we wore or even the music that we had playing in the car. We used to just wait for David's responses: if we wore something new, you got 'what's with those shoes?' If we got carried away and began to sing, he would say 'alright Pavarotti' or if we had an opinion on a band or a song then his response was 'alright Molly Meldrum'. We would play some music that we knew he would dislike just to hear his hilarious remarks.

After an exhausting day, I would often fall asleep in the back seat to get a little power nap before the training session. My power naps were always cut short once David realised I was asleep, but often after a tip off from Mijo or Ante. I would always receive what was known as the 'Mocko Slap'. Whether driving or not, David would take off his black Moccasin which was the standard attire for him and slap me on the head with it to wake me up. 'Wake up Sleepy!' Even to this day, Ante calls me Sleepy! David Cervinski, affectionately called Shovel, is nothing but a legend!

Joey Didulica

I never played with David, but I knew him as a tough, rugged defender who gave everything for his team. I know about his achievements with the 1992 team and how he went on to even bigger and better things. That was probably the start of his top-level career. He was an honest hard worker and everything he achieved was down to the hard work he put in and he never shirked a tackle.

Josip Skoko.



North Geelong's Geelong Advertiser Cup team in 1992. Back row, left to right. Frank Simovic, Branko Culina, Steve Horvat, senior, Ivan Skoko, Steve Horvat, junior, Zoran Roso, David Cervinski, Robert Palmaricciotti, Bobby Simic, Eddie Kuzman, Goran Trogrlic, Eddie Radojevic. Front row: Steve Radojevic, Goran Georgievski, John Didulica, Robert Cosic, Steve Dimovski, Adrian Cervinski, George Karkaletsis, Bogdan Bonk.

David was not only inspirational to his players but also to a coach sitting on the sidelines. His determination and desire to be the best was a testament to his character. A true gentleman.

John Hrkac

I still remember being 18 years old and getting the phone call from 'Shovel' saying he was gonna pick myself, Joey and Ante D up to start training at the Melbourne Knights. They had just won the Grand final in season 1995/96 so players like Danny Tiatto, Fausto DeAmicis, John Markovski, Andrew Marth, the Pondeljok brothers, Joe Spiteri and Joe Simunic to name a few were in that team. Personally I was pretty nervous that day knowing these were the players we were gonna be training with. Shovel and his brother Adrian were being themselves, cracking jokes and taking the mickey. Arriving at the ground and finally walking into the change rooms, Shovel introduced us to the players and said for them all to lookout for his little Geelong farmers. There was plenty of laughs and I felt at ease from then on. That was Shovel on and off the ground he would have your back and nothing has changed till this day.

Mijo Trupkovic

It was such a pleasure to finally meet David as I had heard much about him whilst dating Joey.

In fact, I confessed to David that, at one stage, I may have even known more about him than I did about Joey! Joey's face always lit up when reminiscing about David's antics during their car trips to and from training.

The fundraiser was the ideal setting to pay tribute to such a legend on and off the pitch. The night was a perfect mix of laughter and tears while entertaining stories were fondly remembered and shared. Beloved brother Adrian, community members, former teammates and club presidents all spoke highly of David's positive character strengths of resilience, giving it your all and never giving up. It was these qualities that David exhibited during his footballing career and continues to bravely show through his current ordeal. And now that we have children, it's these attributes that we teach and try to install in them. Unbeknownst to David, his legacy lives on in succeeding generations.

Kate Didulica



Andrew Albert's North Geelong team for the *Geelong Advertiser* Cup in 1986. Back row, left to right: Andrew Albert, John Hrkac, Ivan Skoko, Simon Skazlik, Eddie Radojevic, Wally Stojanovski, David Krasic. Front row: Zoran Roso, Robbie Cosic, Patrick Alilovic, Con Dimopoulos, David Cervinski, Johnny Coutts.

He always used to call me brother! And on the field it felt like that playing alongside him as defenders at North. It was pleasing to see him attain success at a higher level but he never forgot where he came from. Camaraderie and winning was always high on David's agenda. David is a winner because he never gives up. And he is a character. Always good for a laugh. The funniest being where 'brother' came from—mistaken for brothers at a function once because we both had long blond hair. Love you Brother.

Eddie Radojevic

Croatia Geelong S.C.  
Vic. Premier League Champions  
1992



3RD ROW: B.BONK, G. KARKALETSIS, M. WILSON, J. MARKOVAC,  
G. GEORGIEVSKI, R. COSIC. 2ND ROW: S. HORVAT (PRES), B. CULINA  
(COACH), S.HORVAT (CAPT), R. PALMARICCIOTTI, V. SARIC, F.SIMOVIC,  
I. ROSI (ASST COACH). 1ST ROW: D.CERVINSKI, E. KUZMAN,  
M. VUNDERL, A. CERVINSKI, T. TRUPKOVIC, R. MARKOVAC

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North Geelong's Geelong Advertiser Cup winners in 1991. Back row, Slavko Banozic, Robbie Heygesi. Front row: Goran Trogrlic, Ivan Smoljko, Adrian and David Cervinski, Steve Horvat. Photo: Geelong Advertiser.



David Cervinski in action against Brintons in the *Geelong Advertiser* Cup, with John Hrkac, Mitko Nikolovski, referee, David, Paul Mills, Denis Breneizeris.

I was lucky enough to play on the same team as David, coach David and unfortunately play against David, I say that as he was a very clever player who read the game beautifully, he always seemed to be a step ahead of me. David is an enigma in that he was nicknamed shovel, yet he scored some fabulous goals, chipping the keeper, brilliant volleys and convincing headers, his nickname should have been champ because that is how he played. David was always a reliable, competitive player, yet on the park I found him to be affable and it was not uncustomary to see him having a laugh, giving someone a pat the back and encouraging his teammates. The thing I noticed about David would be that when he was listening to you he would look you straight in the eyes and you could tell what he was thinking by his expression, sometimes a smirk, a quizzical look as if to say what the hell are you about Dodge. I'm glad we have had David be a such a big character in Geelong, Victorian and at Australian league level, he is a gift to Football and friendship.

Steve Radojevic



In the thick of the action as usual. David Cervinski versus Brintons in the *Geelong Advertiser* Cup.



Geelong stars in opposition in the National Soccer League. Melbourne Knights versus Sydney Olympic at Somers Street. Steve Horvat, Adrian Cervinski, Kris Trajanovski, David Cervinski.



David leads the celebrations ahead of Frank Juric for Melbourne Knights.

Although I had known Dave previously, it wasn't until 1982 when I had the privilege of playing soccer with him in the Under 14's at Bell Park Soccer Club under the guidance of Jimmy Zadkovic. This would also be the first time that we played against a talented Sunshine George Cross team which fielded players like Andrew Marth, John Markovski and Kevin Muscat.

We played together for a couple of years when our team disbanded to explore senior soccer at various teams in the Geelong area. Quite a few of us went to play in the Under 16 team at Corio Soccer Club and were also given the chance to play in their senior team. Dave, on the other hand, transferred to North Geelong quickly progressing into the senior ranks. I found it very interesting that when Dave and I played together as juniors, he was a quick winger but ended up being recognised as one of the best defenders going around.

Although we went our separate ways in relation to the clubs we played for, I was always interested in the progress Dave was making through the North Geelong ranks and ultimately into the NSL with Melbourne Knights and Wollongong. There was added interest for me as Dave played with his brother Adrian who is also a close friend of mine. I've always known Dave to be a passionate and determined bloke and I'm sure that we both will share stories for many, many years to come!

Robbie Nogger



David with Mark Viduka.

There are people one encounters who, from time to time, evoke envy. Of David, I was always envious of his mullet—god I'd have done anything to have such a mane. And I was always envious of his physical toughness, something else over which he held a significant advantage. Whilst his locks and his physicality were readily apparent, Shovel's real strength was his subtlety. Beating him on the field required more than outmuscling him, often a forlorn task anyway. No player could have survived, and thrived, as he did on that alone and in that wonderful Knights generation. I loved playing against David, and the Knights. Not because there was consistent success. Quite the opposite actually. However, the struggle was always engaging and enriching. I knew David only on the field. I remember that fondly. He challenged my football and made me look for other solutions in-game. And again he got the better of me on Grand Final Day in 1996—and those moccasins, I envied those too! Thank you to David for his contribution to the NSL (with the Knights, Carlton and the Wolves). Grace and peace to him and those close.

Andy Harper



Knights champions again in 1996



Celebrating with Wollongong Wolves.



Ivan Roso with 1993 *Geelong Advertiser* Cup squad. Back row: Ivan Roso, Stan Demo, John Didulica, Tom Trupkovic, Ivan Skoko, David Cervinski, Robbie Cosic, Goran Georgievski, David Krasic, Pejo Maric. Front row: Steve Dimovski, Peter Stojanovski, Bobby Simic, Marijan Vunderl, Glen Stefanac, Richie O'Sullivan, Chris Emsovski.



David Cervinski, with Tom Pondeljak, Joe Spiteri, Dragi Nastevski and Zoran Markovski.



David Cervinski with a spectacular clearance at Olympic Park against South Melbourne.



David Cervinski and Andrew Marth make sure there is no way through for Adelaide City.



Ian Dobson's Knights celebration the back-to-back triumph against Marconi in 1996.

Former Melbourne Knights and Wollongong Wolves defender David Cervinski was one a kind, a character rarely seen in the A-League these days. A distinctive ponytail, one of few to win four domestic titles and probably the only player to wear moccasins on stage to accept his winners' medal.

The football community has rallied behind the player affectionately known as "Shovel" for his style and tendency to make divots in the pitch, according to his former Knights captain Andrew Marth. "Even a South Melbourne supporter messaged saying he hated me as a player, but wished me well and said keep fighting. They were throwing peanuts at you back in the day, now they're giving me money."

Cervinski was the backbone of some of the most talented domestic teams, but didn't give Mark Viduka (Knights) or young Carlton duo Mark Bresciano and Vince Grella an inch at training. "Yeah, Viduka knows my elbows and legs pretty well. Marking the strikers was part of training," he said. "Grella, Bresciano. All these players that have played for Australia you watch and it gives you a special buzz. You look at their success and think, maybe I contributed a bit to their achievements."

The moccasins were worn on stage in the Knights' 1996 grand final win over Marconi at Olympic Park. "After the game the pitch got invaded and the fans took everything, my socks, shinpads," Cervinski said. "All I was left with my shorts and my moccas in my bag and I had to wear it out on stage to get my medal from Jeff Kennett. He just laughed and said 'you're a classic'."

David Davutovic (From *Herald-Sun*, 29 January 2017).



Steve Horvat, David Cervinski, Archie Thompson, Adrian Cervinski



Part of the crowd at the recent function for David at the Dom.

The memories that I will never forget of Shovel is when we the 'Geelong Boys' were travelling to/from Sunshine to Melbourne Knights trainings in his beloved 'Bronco'. In that Bronco were lots of laughs and fun times. We, the apprentices, Joey, Mijo and myself saw the Mocco come off anytime we said or did something silly. We couldn't mention any song we liked on the radio too loudly because Shovel would put on another station. If one of us fell asleep, usually Joey, we could get woken up by the Mocco. Off the pitch Shovel is always fun to be around, with jokes and laughter. Also protective of us 'Geelong boys' which I admired. On the pitch, Shovel to me was a determined leader, disciplined, focused and he knew well the job in hand. As a friend, I wish David the very best. He was very successful as a player and I believe the success will continue when he's on the road to full health.

Ante Deak (deaksi-smurf)



Andy Paschalidis, David and Adrian Cervinski.



Julie Cervinski (Adrian's wife), Wanda Cervinski (David and Adrian's mother), David Cervinski and his partner Amanda Harvey, Ashley Cervinski (Adrian's daughter), Adrian Cervinski.

'We have all been hugely saddened by the tragic news that National Soccer League champion David Cervinski is suffering from stage four melanoma,' said Australia PFA chief executive John Didulica. 'Issues such as this emerging so long after a player's career has finished highlights the importance of wellbeing initiatives, such as skin cancer checks being a regular part of life for our members. Ensuring football is as safe as possible is an important part of developing the sport, and this partnership will assist with this aim.'

The pony-tailed Cervinski was known as a tough centre-back, who made his mark on Singapore at the height of the S-League's popularity, helping unfashionable Gombak finish fifth in the 1999 season. In his native Australia, he won National Soccer League titles with the Melbourne Knights and Wollongong Wolves.

(From ESPN January 2017)

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