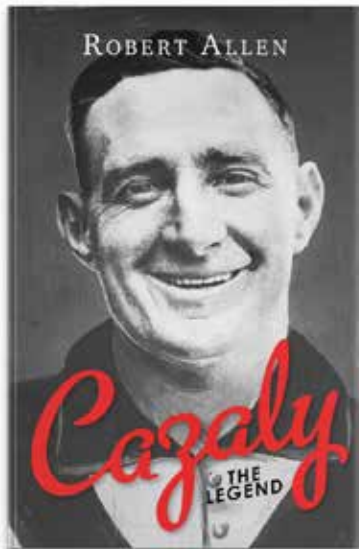


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## Cazaly: The Legend

By Robert Allen

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Reviewed by Cat Jones

Australian Sports Museum

For a large portion of Australian society, the Cazaly name is synonymous with the AFL Grand Final as the crowd sings along with Mike Brady. For most, though, little is known about the details of his football career as a coach and player, let alone his prowess in other sports or his influence as a sports physio. In writing *Cazaly: The Legend*, Robert Allen has created a volume that not only documents the life of Cazaly but also the ebbs and flows of Australian football clubs across the nation.

Through ten years of meticulous research, Allen has created a work

that readers will find appealing not only for the journey into Cazaly's life but also that of his family and the clubs of which he was a part. This work delves into the Cazaly family history, the travels of Roy from St Kilda to South Melbourne, Tasmania and back again, the place of football in wartime Australia, and the on-field and off-field pursuits of Cazaly that solidify him as a great of the Australian code.

The depth and care of Allen's research should not be underestimated. With more than 1000 endnotes, Allen not only provides the most specific details about Roy Cazaly and his world, but also a starting point for many a boffin to explore, research and read topics further. By including quotes from Cazaly's teammates and contemporaries, Allen is able to create the picture of a man who was not only devoted to improving the skills of each individual player he coached, but the place of the clubs in the competition and the quality of the game itself. This was a man who was physically incredible – he still played games of football into his sixties – but also had great care for his family and his football family.

By splitting the book into quarters, Allen can distinguish between the stages in Cazaly's life with ease, from his early life, success as a rower and early VFL career through to his retirement in Tasmania and the time spent with his grandchildren. Football fans will delight in the details of his playing days with St Kilda and South Melbourne in the VFL, as well as his sojourns into Tasmanian football and the country leagues. The moments in Cazaly's playing and coaching careers dovetail nicely into snippets of the history of Australian football as well as Cazaly's rather spectacular success as a local cricketer.

Where Mike Brady's song describes Cazaly's athleticism and appeal to football crowds, what it doesn't touch on is the success that he had as a coach and a sports physio. Allen's book describes Cazaly's influence in turning clubs around in detail, using anecdotes from players to show the care he had for the success of individuals in the teams under his watch. Quotes abound in these sections to highlight the methods Cazaly employed, both as a coach and in looking after the health of footballers.

Allen also weaves in snippets of his subject's off-field life to give the picture of Cazaly as a whole. Roy's relationship with his family is described in tender notes, a perfect complement to the rough nature of the on-field football stories. Again, Allen's selection of quotes helps to bring the man to life, woven in to highlight the dramas of his many moves from city to country and from state to state.

A researcher's dream lies at the end of the publication with a wealth of statistics and sources. It gives no doubt about the meticulous nature of Allen's research on Cazaly as well as the social and sporting context of his life. Not only do the endnotes give extra details and the author's comments, they also give the reader the perfect springboard for further reading on football and Australian life.

At a time when isolation due to the coronavirus pandemic has meant that Australians are turning to their bookshelves for entertainment rather than the sporting fields, Allen's book on this legend of Australian football is a welcome addition to the reading pile. It is written in an engaging and often humorous manner, and you don't have to be a sports fan to enjoy this book on a football giant.