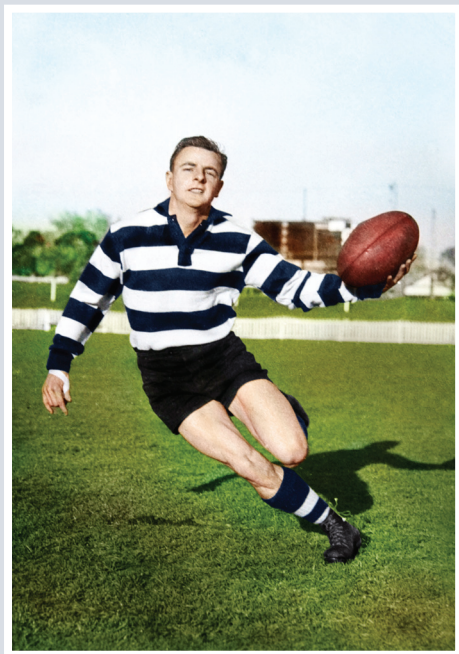




LIFE MEMBER

Neil ("Nipper") Trezise

8 February 1931–20 August 2006



Neil Trezise grew up in Ballarat where he played in the Ballarat High School football and cricket teams and competed in athletics, then went to Ballarat Teachers' College. He played for Redan before being recruited by Geelong.

When he joined the Cats, Neil was the youngest and smallest player. Coach Reg Hickey called him 'Nipper' and it stuck. In his playing years, he travelled from Ballarat to Geelong on the train. His mum packed him a sandwich to eat on the way. He would walk around Eastern Beach to fill in time, then walk to Kardinia Park, play football, walk back to the railway station and catch the train back to Ballarat.¹

Neil Trezise played 192 matches for Geelong between 1949 and 1959, including seven night matches, and kicked 272 goals. He played in the 1951 and 1952 premiership teams and 23 of the '26 games without a loss' in 1952–53. He was Geelong's leading goal kicker and vice-captain in 1958 and captain in 1959. He won the Gardiner

Medal (reserves best and fairest) in 1960. He was also a professional sprint runner who trained with Arthur Edgerton and was known for his pace on the football field.

Col Hutchinson describes Neil Trezise and Peter Pianto as 'one of Geelong's greatest roving combinations'. He writes of Neil Trezise:

...his quickness off the mark, clever anticipation and courage made him a highly effective team member. He was adept at reading the play and positioning himself correctly to gain possession of the ball. He was particularly dangerous around goal and kicked well with either foot.²

Some highlights reported in the newspapers included the 1952 semi-final won by Geelong against Collingwood where 'Lou Richards, Bob Rose and Thorold Merrett made no attempt to pick up Trezise or Pianto, even when it became apparent they must play counter-football to dim the brilliance of the Geelong pair.' On another occasion it was reported that Neil Trezise somersaulted:

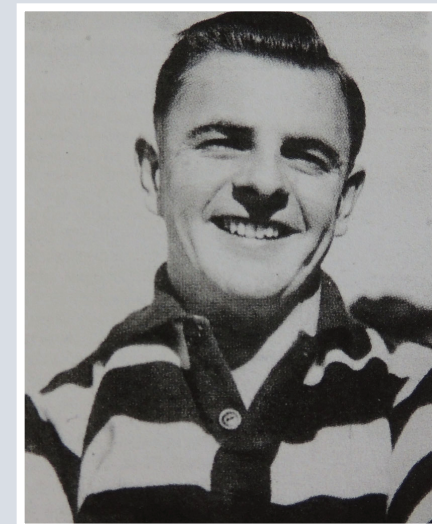
...in approved gymnastic fashion over the even smaller Melbourne rover, Wilson ... The Melbourne player baulked as Trezise raced towards the ball, and the Geelong rover performed a turn which might have won him an Olympic diving title if performed in a swimming pool.³



In a match against Footscray the highlight was Neil Trezise kicking eight goals including six in succession. In 1954: 'Geelong's small brigade, led by Neil Trezise, was mainly responsible for its hard fought win against Hawthorn at Glenferrie Oval.' Against Essendon in 1955: 'Trezise coolly picked up from a pack in the goal square and screwed through a left-foot goal over his shoulder.' And in a match against Fitzroy: 'Neil Trezise was the midget-size dynamo who generated the power for the Cats' wonderful win.'

In another of the family connections made through football, Neil Trezise and teammate Ron Hovey married sisters. Neil and his wife Joan had two children, Ian and Helen. Following his football career, Neil Trezise operated a sports store in Malop Street until 1982.

In 1961, Neil was the ALP candidate for Geelong West in the State Government election and captained the reserves in a game against South Melbourne on voting day. He was elected to State Parliament in 1964 and served for 28 years, retiring in 1992. He was Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation in the Cain / Kirner Governments from 1982 to 1992. As Minister, he played a leading role in the establishment of the Melbourne Tennis Centre and renovations to the MCG including the Great Southern Stand, ensuring the Grand Final remained at the MCG rather than the VFL-preferred option of Waverly Park. Neil's son, Ian Trezise, is the current State Parliament member for Geelong.



Neil Trezise was made a life member of Geelong Football Club in 1956. He was a member of the general committee 1959–84 and 1993–96, a member of the match committee 1959–69, Vice-President 1962–73 and President from 1974–79. He was president of Geelong Football Club in 1975 when the sports clinic was opened.

Neil played in the past versus present players match in 1959, and joined the Past Players and Officials Club committee in 1988. He assisted in taking groups on tours of Kardinia Park and was made a life member at the annual meeting on 6 February 2006.⁴

The minutes of the Past Players and Officials Club annual meeting in 2007 recorded the passing of 'two club stalwarts'—Neil Trezise (life member) and George Dandy (honorary life member).⁵



Joan and Neil Trezise

Sources

- 1 Unidentified newspaper cutting in possession of Ian Trezise
- 2 Hutchinson, C. 1984, *Cat's Tales*, Geelong Advertiser Pty Ltd, p.178
- 3 Unidentified newspaper cuttings in possession of Ian Trezise
- 4 Minutes, 6 Feb. 2006
- 5 Minutes, 12 Feb. 2007