



Southern Football Netball League

Hall of Fame



DAVID MARTIN

SOUTHERN FOOTBALL NETBALL LEAGUE

- Bentleigh Football Club Best & Fairest x 7 1996-2002
- Southern Football Netball League Division 1 League Best & Fairest x 3 1997-99
- Outstanding Individual Achievement Award Recipient from AFL Victoria – 2008
- Bentleigh Football Club Life Member

Key defenders are close to the most important players in any footy side, yet they are often typecast as unfashionable and never get the kudos they deserve. Especially when it comes time to hand out gongs.

You have to go all the way back to 1983 to find the last time a key backman won the Brownlow Medal (North Melbourne great Ross Glendinning), which is what makes David Martin's achievements so extraordinary.

To win one league Best and Fairest while playing as a tall defender is a terrific effort. To win six in a row across two separate competitions is frankly unbelievable. But that's exactly what he did with Bentleigh in the late 90s and early 2000s.

Martin, a 6-foot-3 centre half back, joined the Demons in 1995 and quickly established himself as one of the side's most influential players, earning himself the nickname 'freak' – a nickname Bentleigh President Garry Matlock said he thoroughly deserved.

"He was a freakish player. At local community level to see that type of player running around and playing on the quality players that he played on... yeah he was a freak," he said.

"He was an outstanding mark... He wasn't a leaper, he didn't leap over players all the time, but his judgement was incredible.

"We used to sort of say 'we don't need anyone else there in the backline because we have David' because he just had this ability to read the play."

In his second year at Bentleigh he won the first of seven consecutive club B&Fs, before going on to claim three SFNL Division One Best and Fairest awards in a row between 1997 and 1999.

The Demons transferred to the VAFA in 2000 and Martin's dominance continued, winning comp Best and Fairests in Divisions Four, Three and Two in successive years.

The ultimate success, however, unfortunately eluded Martin during his time at the Demons, though twice they were runners up in the VAFA (2000 and 2001).

Martin was officially recognised for his illustrious career when AFL Victoria presented him with an Outstanding Individual Achievement Award in 2008. He is also a life member of the Bentleigh Football Club.

Matlock described Martin as a "scrupulously fair player" and was unequivocal in his praise of him as a person.

"He is a real gentlemen and a lovely fella. Tremendous guy," Matlock said.

He also praised Martin's loyalty to the club, which was most evident when he stuck by his mates as the club transitioned into the Ammos, rather than chasing the big bucks he could have commanded at other SFNL clubs.

A humble and unassuming champion, Martin's induction into the Hall of Fame is a just reward for one of the SFNL's greats.

By Will Hunter