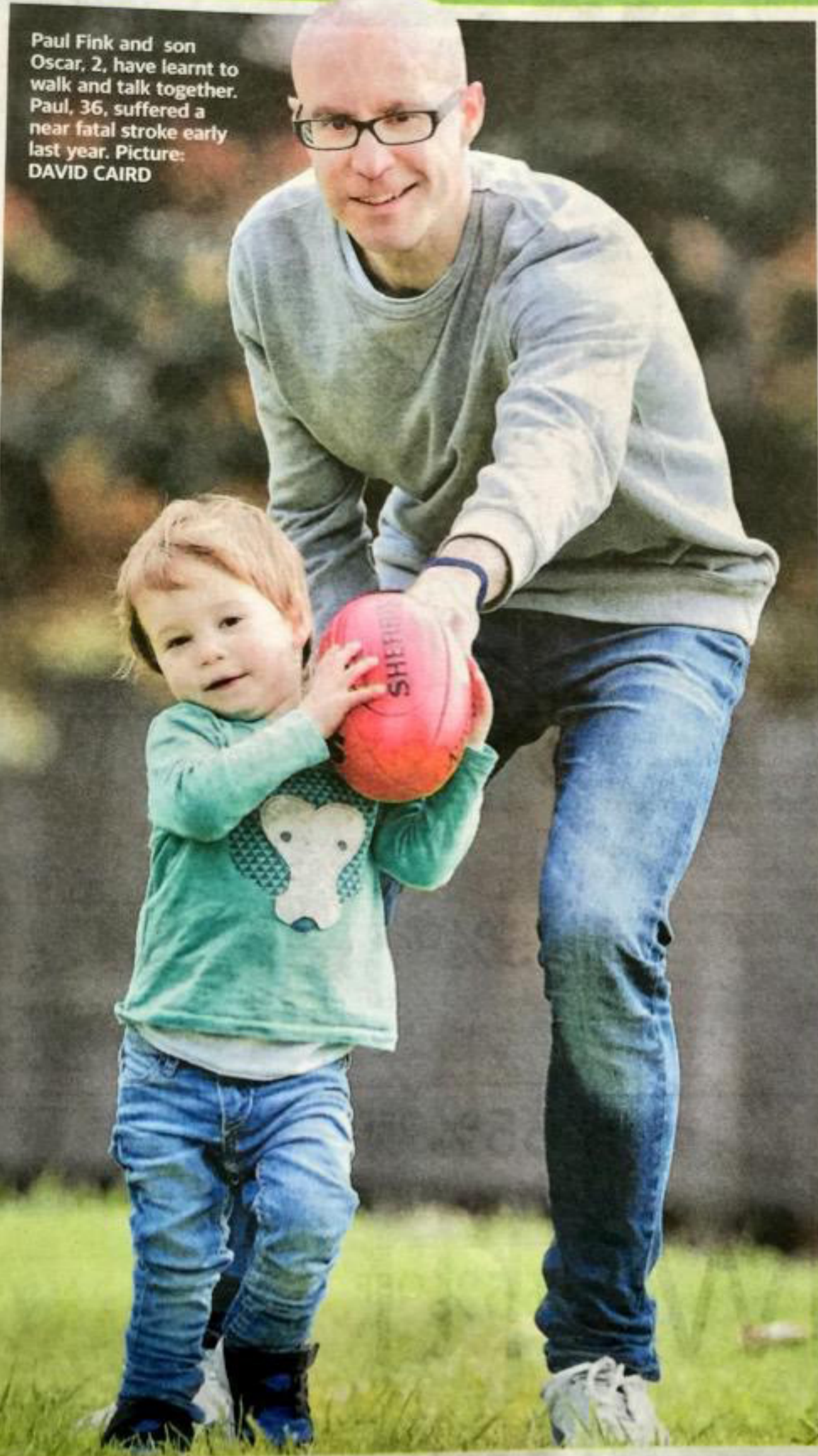


A LITTLE BOY HELPS HIS DAD LEARN TO WALK AND TALK

Paul Fink and son Oscar, 2, have learnt to walk and talk together. Paul, 36, suffered a near fatal stroke early last year. Picture: DAVID CAIRD



Finks are in sync

EVONNE MADDEN
MEDICAL REPORTER

PAUL and Oscar Fink are in sync like no other father and son.

Their family were nearly torn apart early last year, when Paul — aged just 34 — suffered a massive stroke.

The first-time dad was not expected to survive the brain bleed, much less make any form of recovery.

But incredibly, Mr Fink has learned to walk and talk again — just as his toddler son was picking up those skills for the first time.

Wife and mum Lauren has watched proudly as the pair worked through milestones together.

"It's been amazing because they really have been learning a lot at the same time," she said. "For Paul, it's therapy, and for Oscar, it's great play time with his dad."

The father-son duo were so in tune that Paul got rid of his walking stick within days of Oscar taking his first steps.

"Loz (Lauren) and Oscar have been my lifeline," Mr Fink said. "They are my inspiration to get better."

That the Finks will celebrate another milestone tomorrow — Father's Day — would have been unimaginable in January 2014.

Mr Fink woke one morning

with a "shocking headache". Within hours, the super-fit marathon runner was having emergency brain surgery at The Alfred, as his wife was told of the dreadful prognosis: "The surgeons were very upfront — they said it was very, very unlikely he could survive."

But after two weeks in an induced coma, and three more operations, Mr Fink's survival odds gradually began to improve. The next challenge was rehabilitation.

Mr Fink's stroke was caused by the bursting of malformed blood vessels in the left side of his brain. This severely affected his speech and movement on the right side of his body.

Mr Fink spent six months in rehabilitation at Caulfield Hospital, followed by another 10 months of treatment as an Alfred Health outpatient.

Dr Mithu Palit, head of The Alfred's neurological rehabilitation department, said recovering from this type of brain injury took the stamina of a "professional athlete".

The Alfred Healthy Heroes Father's Day Appeal at alfred-foundation.org.au or call 1800 888 878.

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