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⇒ **FFA 2010 AWARD NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN**

Football Federation Australia (FFA) has announced that nominations for the 2010 Australian Football Awards are now open.

From the Qantas Socceroos and Westfield Matildas, to the many thousands of Australian's who enjoy playing football each and every week, the Awards is an opportunity for the entire football family to celebrate their passion for our game and to reward outstanding achievements and contributions.

The Australian Football Awards recognise players at a professional level together with teams, volunteers, coaches and referees at a non professional level.

"The popularity of our code continues to grow amongst men, women and children with a pproximately 970,000 Australians of all age groups playing the game either formally or informally," said FFA CEO Ben Buckley.

"And with the start of the local winter football season just around the corner, we are searching the country for the Team of the Year.

"Nominations for Team of the Year are open from today and we are calling out the the football family to nominate their team, or another team, that they believe deserve be rewarded," he said.

Team of the Year Award is open to any team which is part of a club registered with FFA, across all age groups. Teams may nominate online by visiting [www.footballaustralia.com.au/footballawards](http://www.footballaustralia.com.au/footballawards) until 5.00pm AEDT on 26 March 2010.

All winners of the 2010 Australian Football Awards will be announced at a special gala ceremony in Melbourne on 22 May. This is the second consecutive year the Awards have been held.

There are three main categories in the Australian Football Awards. The general awards category includes FFA Medal and Community Service Award. The professional category includes Footballer of the Year and U20 Footballer of the Year awards for both men and women. These awards will recognise on field excellence and off field professionalism of Australian professional football players. The non professional category includes a team, volunteer, coach and referee award.

⇒ **A-LEAGUE ALL-STAR TEAM IN 2010?**

Ever wondered what it would be like to be a coach and select an all star lineup?

Well football fans now have the opportunity to get interactive with the Hyundai A-League by nominating the best players for a Hyundai A-League



With LAKIS KONISTIS

**Sports World**

2010 All Stars team.

The Hyundai A-League All Stars team includes one goalkeeper, four defenders, three midfielders and three strikers.

You be the judge- the Hyundai A-League All Stars team is in your hands. Who do you think were the stand out performers in the Hyundai A-League 2009/10 season?

To vote visit [www.a-league.com.au/allstars](http://www.a-league.com.au/allstars) and cast your vote. Competition closes 11.59pm AEST, 14th February 2010.

*Hyundai A-League 2009 All Stars team*

- Goalkeeper: Eugene Galekovic (Adelaide United)
- Defenders: Cassio (Adelaide United), Scott Jamieson (Adelaide United), Craig Moore (Queensland Roar), Sasa Ognenovski (Adelaide United)
- Midfielders: Travis Dodd (Adelaide United), Mile Jedinak (Central Coast Mariners), Michael Zullo (Queensland Roar), Carlos Hernandez (Melbourne Victory)
- Strikers: Shane Smeltz (Wellington Phoenix), Nikita Rukavytsya (Perth Glory)
- Coach: Aurelio Vidmar (Adelaide United)

⇒ **SOUTH AFRICA SAFE SAYS MARADONA**

Argentina coach Diego Maradona dismissed security concerns at this year's World Cup.

South Africa's high crime rate has sparked worries about security for players and fans since it won the right to become the first African nation to host football's premier event. With the tournament just months away, new questions were raised about South Africa's ability to cope with a terrorist attack after Angolan separatists ambushed the Togo team bus as it traveled to the African Cup of Nations tournament in Angola earlier this month.

Maradona had not been expected to address reporters during his visit after coming off a two-month suspension by FIFA for his rude recent outburst, but he relented with a few words about security and his hope that Argentina could win its first World Cup since 1986.

"We want to break the curse after 24

years," Maradona said. "The desire never goes away. The hope never goes."

For once he relaxed and friendly, and also signed autographs for students and others at the sports campus, and kicked a ball around.

When asked about security as he toured the campus, Maradona stated: "We don't have anything to complain about."

Tournament organisers and South African government officials are taking extraordinary measures to fight crime during the World Cup, including recruiting more than 140,000 new police.

Argentina will face South Korea, Nigeria and Greece in Group B.

⇒ **KAKA & ZIDANE TO PLAY IN HAITI RELIEF GAME**

Brazilian midfielder Kaka and retired soccer star Zinedine Zidane are set to play an exhibition game in Lisbon on January 25th to raise money for earthquake-hit Haiti.

The Match Against Poverty is being organised by the United Nations Development Programme and Portuguese club Benfica, which will host the game at its Stadium of Light.

Benfica announced Monday that Real Madrid's Kaka will line up with former Juventus midfielder Pavel Nedved and Spain's Fernando Hierro against a team of Benfica All Stars.

The UN has estimated that 3 million Haitians were affected by last week's quake and 2 million require food assistance.

⇒ **DATOLO SIGNS FOR OLYMPIAKOS**

Jesus Datolo has agreed to finish the season on loan at Olympiakos Pireaus. The Argentine international has failed to make an impact at Napoli this season.

Datolo will stay at the Karaiskakis Stadium till the end of the season, following which Olympiakos have an option to make the transfer permanent by paying Napoli a fee of 4.5 million euro.

Napoli signed Datolo from Boca Juniors for a fee of 6 million euro. The 25-year-old winger penned a five year deal at the San Paolo. So far he only managed to net one goal in 22 Serie A games.

Datolo will look to secure a place in Argentina's World Cup squad at Olympiakos. He made a stormy debut for Diego Maradona's side last year by scoring in Argentina's friendly against Russia (3-2 win).

⇒ **MORE SOCCER ON U.S. TV**

Fox will be shortly announcing that it

is launching its second all-soccer network in the United States on March 1st.

The new network, which will be called "Fox Soccer Plus", will televise matches of the European Champions League, England's Premier League, the English Football Association Cup and the Italian Serie A.

Fox Soccer Channel began operation in 1997 and changed its name to FSC five years ago. "As America's interest in the world's game is increasing, the launch of Fox Soccer Plus will complement and enhance our current programming on Fox Soccer Channel," new FSC general manager David Nathanson said.

Fox has been televising the Premier League in the U.S. since 1998.

⇒ **HENRY ESCAPES PUNISHMENT**

Surprise, surprise...

French captain Thierry Henry escaped being punished for his infamous handball in the 2010 World Cup finals play-off against Ireland, FIFA announced.

FIFA's disciplinary committee admitted they were powerless to punish the 1998 World Cup-winning striker because their rules forbade them to do so if the original misdemeanour had not been seen by the match officials.

"There is no other legal text that would allow the committee to impose sanctions for any incidents missed by match officials," according to FIFA.

And what does Thierry Henry think about it all? "I hope that this is the end of the story, I hope so with all my heart."

⇒ **BACK HOME?**

The NSW Premier League competition is not that far away and the current twelve teams are looking quite 'rusty' after their well deserved break.

It will be a most interesting competition in 2010 with so many teams having bolstered their playing ranks in the off-season.

For those of you keen to see some local action, here are this weekend's scheduled trial matches.

Saturday 23rd January 2010

- Bankstown City Lions v Sutherland Sharks - Seymour Shaw - 7pm
- Blacktown City FC v Manly United - Lily Homes Stadium - 7pm
- West Sydney Berries v Bonnyrigg White Eagles - Lidcombe Oval - 7pm
- Rockdale City Suns v Fraser Park - Bicentennial Park - 6pm
- Marconi Stallions v Balmain SC - 7pm

Sunday 24th January 2010

- South Coast Wolves v APIA Leichhardt Tigers - Campus East - 9am