



By George Stavroulakis

Van Marwijk: We're getting there

Bert van Marwijk wants the Socceroos to get better and better but was pleased after an improved performance in the 0-0 draw with Colombia. In his second game in charge, van Marwijk's men held the Colombians in a plucky performance at Craven Cottage.

The result came four days after the 4-1 defeat to Oslo.

"We know Colombia is a very good team, one of the best in the world," the Dutchman said.

"They can bring three teams on the same level. We saw Friday last week against France, when you win in France 3-2 you are a very good team. I think today we had a very good plan and we could already see the way we want to play, this is a beginning.

"We played very well in the first half. In the second half it became more difficult because of the qualities of Colombia. But I think in the second half we also had good character to bring the 0-0 tonight.

"In Oslo we wanted to do the same, but then we only had one normal training. Now we know each other a few days longer and we trained a few days more. I think you can see the players are beginning to understand more of what we want and how we want to play.

"They like to play that way. The best combination is

that you play in the way that fits the players and also the coach, you could see it especially in the first half. It must become better and better but this is a good start."

A relieved-looking Van Marwijk joked that debutant Danny Vukovic gave the penalty away in the second half on purpose.

"He forced a penalty and he saved it," he said.

"I spoke already to him, in the last two days we did a few penalties after the training, so I said you did it on purpose. But I am happy that he held the penalty."



Cahill: Cricket scandal is a sad moment for Australian sport

Tim Cahill says the Socceroos can play a part in restoring the pride in Australian sport following the cricket scandal in South Africa.

The Australian cricket squad was caught tampering with the ball during their third test. It has caused an international incident with captain Steve Smith banned for one match.

The Socceroos are focused on Tuesday's friendly against Colombia but Cahill described the scandal as "a sad moment for Australian sport".

"My response is that we want to be respectful of the situation and understand that we want to protect our playing group from what's

happening outside," he said.

"We are in a professional environment in our camp, and our focus has to be on preparing for the game tomorrow night, for the bigger picture of Russia, and it's important being an older player that you try to move the papers out of the rooms where the guys are and make them focus on why they are here

"It's a sad moment for Australian sport. We're very proud of where we come from and it's time now to try to make right for Australian sport as a whole. We can play our part in that as a team and as a squad by tomorrow night leading on and off the park, setting examples and

representing our country with pride.

"I feel, as our staff and group of players, we need to keep doing what we've been doing and that's being professional, staying in camp, training hard and fulfilling our expectations from the Australian public of growing our game, growing the sport and creating more followers in football and being prepared for one of the biggest stages on earth, which is the World Cup in Russia.

"As professionals it's our job to make sure our mindset is on the game tomorrow night. It's hard in a way but that's what I've done in the past 20 years of my career."

Sorensen warns Denmark: You're stupid to underestimate Australia

The former Danish international and Melbourne City keeper has warned his national side that they're "stupid" to overlook the Socceroos.

Sorensen made 101 appearances for the Danish national team and over 400 Premier League appearances for Stoke City, Sunderland and Aston Villa, before finishing his career in Melbourne.

The Dane was impressed with the A-League during his spell and believes the Socceroos' World Cup opponents will

underestimate Australia at their own peril.

"I think the Socceroos are just trying to find their feet under a new manager ... you can't put too much into results right now," Sorensen as part of a visit in Canberra on Wednesday.

"This is the last chance to try things. I'm sure Australia will be ready for the World Cup when it comes around," Sorensen told The Canberra Times.

"If you don't show Australia respect ... they've caused a lot of teams problems. If



you don't take that seriously and you overlook them, you're stupid.

"The expectation in Denmark is the game against Australia is the one Denmark has

to win. But Australia will be saying the same. I don't think anyone is looking down on Australia."

Sorensen also claimed that the World Cup will be the perfect opportunity for Rogic to showcase himself at the highest level. "The World Cup is the best window to showcase yourself, all of the Australian players will be looking to that," he said. "Everyone already has a sense of who [Rogic] is, a good World Cup can only help."

Birthday boy Vukovic in dream debut

Danny Vukovic celebrated his Socceroo debut and his 33rd birthday with a precious penalty save to earn Australia a draw against Colombia in London.

Vukovic replaced Brad Jones at half-time at Craven Cottage.

The Genk keeper was kept busy in the second half, before giving away a penalty in the final few minutes, just to save Miguel Borja's spot-kick.

It capped off a memorable night for Vukovic, who also turned 33 today.

"It's an amazing birthday present, one I won't forget," he said.

"To make my debut, to save a penalty.

I'm disappointed I gave the penalty away in the first place but the main thing is I made the save. I was surprised before the game that my family was here, I wasn't expecting them to be here. So it's been an amazing night.

"For me it was my first game, there's certainly a lot of things to learn from what happened in the 45 minutes that I played.

"But overall I'm very happy with the result and how I've gone. It's nice to have finally made my debut. My first camp was before the 2006 World Cup and it's been a long time coming I

feel."

Vukovic dived low to his left to thwart Borja and keep Colombia goalless.

"To be honest I was still really upset at myself for giving it away," he admitted.

"For some reason I had a feeling it was going to go that way. We study the penalties before the game, the three keepers and Tony Franken the goalkeeping coach. I just felt it was going to go that way and it wasn't the best struck penalty, but I'm just happy I made the save."

Australia gave a much improved performance from the one against Norway four days ago, one full of

character and fight.

Vukovic believed the Socceroos deserved a draw against La Tricolor.

"I think we defended really well," he said.

"We made it difficult for them. They did have a few chances, they hit the post a few times. I felt there was a few decisions where they might have been offside, but overall we can be really happy with that result against really good opposition.

"They beat France only a few days ago and they couldn't score against us tonight. We take a lot of confidence from that."

