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SOCCEROOS

2014 AND 2018

WORLD CUP SQUADS...

As Socceroos fans don the polar-fleece and look towards another World Cup dawn, we cast our mind back to 2014. Less has changed than you might have thought...



The 2018 World Cup was meant to be Ange Postecoglou's judgement day. 2014's tournament slammed down two markers for the next four years to be judged on – Australia wanted squad regeneration and the birth of a new footballing ideology.

So, given that the 2014 World Cup squad is largely acknowledged as a young, inexperienced side gaining crucial experience, how is it that four years later, only six of Bert van Marwijk's 23-man team have prior World Cup experience?

What went wrong?

The Socceroos now face a mirror image of 2014 – another young, fresh-faced squad ready to build for the future. Postecoglou's resignation may have denied us the final opportunity to assess our tactical development, but we can still summarise how Ange's 2014 World Cup squad matriculated into the Socceroos we have today.

These are the final winners and losers from the Postecoglou era.

WINNERS

#Massimo Luongo –

As QPR's reigning Fans' Player of the Year, 25-year-old Luongo is one of the success stories from Ange's reign. Although he didn't appear at the 2014 World Cup, his technical ability and squad experience at three major tournaments are set to make him one of van Marwijk's key players in Russia and a Socceroos stalwart for years to come.

#Mat Ryan –

Ryan arguably boasts the most successful cycle of any of Ange's 2014 World Cup team.

Postecoglou admitted his choice to play the inexperienced goalkeeper in 2014 possibly "cost us points", but off the back of a move to Valencia and a terrific season in the Premier League for Brighton, this was the type of regeneration Aussie fans were hoping for.

#Mile Jedinak –

Postecoglou's decision to award the captaincy to then-30 year old Mile Jedinak was a blessing for the Socceroos. His experienced leadership has proved invaluable throughout World Cup qualification, with the midfielder's 15 goals rendering him the second highest goalscorer of Ange's tenure. His four years at club level for Crystal Palace and Aston Villa have largely replicated this success. How Jedi fits into van Marwijk's set up in Russia, however, remains to be seen.

#Tim Cahill –

The 2014 World Cup was the rebirth of Tim Cahill, with the Aussie doubling both his appearance and goal tallies from the previous two years between 2014 and 2015. Although Cahill's age has largely prevented a similar success story at club level, Postecoglou's ability to get the best out of Timmy is a key factor in the wider Australian public's infatuation with the striker today.

#Mathew Leckie –

Now plying his trade for Hertha Berlin, after Aaron Mooy, Leckie is the only Australian outfielder playing regularly in one of Europe's top five divisions.

The winger's stellar performances at the 2014 World Cup were the reason behind his move to the Bundesliga, which has translated to generally exciting performances for the national team.

#Mark Milligan –

Although Milligan only made one brief appearance at the 2014 World Cup, his reputation as an excellent utility option and back-up central defender was forged during this World Cup cycle.

Given his passing range, capable tackling and regular appearances under van Marwijk so far, it seems plausible Milligan will play a larger World Cup role this time around.

FINAL VERDICT

While Ryan, Luongo and Leckie have excelled since their inclusion in the 2014 World Cup, every other leftover

from Brazil is now in their early to mid 30's – not a strong record for a supposedly reformative campaign.

Of the three true winners, only Ryan is a crucial performer for a large club. Luongo is in a lower-table side in England's second tier, while Leckie is often a substitute in Berlin. However it's inaccurate to judge Postecoglou for this rate of development – it's largely down to the individual players. So let's have a look at the younger stars who had the potential in 2014, but couldn't make the progress.

LOSERS

#Oliver Bozanic –

The 2014 World Cup arrived smack-bang in the middle of the best period of Bozanic's career. He was 25-years-old, playing regularly for Swiss club Luzern and subsequently made two appearances at the Brazilian showpiece.

A run of two short-term injuries aside, his decision to leave Luzern prevented Bozanic from forging a prolonged Socceroos career. Now 29, he's only accumulated three Socceroos caps since 2014 and has only ventured overseas for a brief, unsuccessful spell in Japan.

#Jason Davidson –

Davidson's solid World Cup performances earned him a move to West Brom in 2014, which the fullback couldn't translate into his first big break. Disappointingly for the then-23 year old, Davidson then couldn't impress enough at Championship side Huddersfield to earn a permanent move. The former Ange favourite then lost his Socceroos position to the trio of Aziz Behich, Brad Smith and Alex Gersbach. However, in a bright sign for the future, the 26-year-old recently won the Slovenian league / cup double with his new loan club, Olimpija Ljubljana.

#Ben Halloran –

A regular in the 2. Bundesliga from 2013 to 2015, 21-year-old Halloran appeared in every group-stage match as a substitute, but would only make one Socceroos appearance after the tournament.

A knee injury somewhat derailed his career at Heidenheim