



By George Stavroulakis

//FFA Cup

APIA LEICHHARDT KNOCKS MELBOURNE VICTORY OUT OF FFA CUP, SYDNEY FC SNEAKS PAST CAIRNS FC

There was no sign of Keisuke Honda but another Japanese player stole the show as APIA Leichhardt Tigers stunned Melbourne Victory 3-2 in the FFA Cup on Tuesday night. Tasuku Sekiya scored a goal in each half as the former National Soccer League club booked a quarterfinal spot in a thrilling clash at Leichhardt Oval.

It was the seventh time a state-league outfit has managed to beat a top-tier team in the knockout tournament, but this was perhaps the biggest shock yet. The A-League champions were clearly rusty and without their prized marquee signing in Honda, who was left behind in Melbourne and ineligible to play in any case as he awaits his visa. But Sekiya -- who works part-time as a kitchen hand at the Sydney Opera House -- stepped up in his idol's absence. The 25-year-old striker has ambitions of playing in the A-League and on the evidence of his electric performance against Victory -- and his form in the NSW NPL -- he deserves at least a look-in. Sekiya opened the scoring in the ninth minute with a neat back-post finish -- then he made it 2-0 shortly after the break with a thunderous shot that gave goalkeeper Matt Acton no chance. Victory soon woke up, though, and squared the ledger with two goals in the space of six minutes from Kenny Athiu. A third goal looked inevitable, but a visibly tired APIA kept pushing and eventually got their reward. Defender Nathan Millgate headed home from a corner in the 80th minute to restore their advantage and seal a famous result for the club.

Sydney FC - Cairns FC. 2-1 Cup holders Sydney FC dodged a disaster of their own in far north Queensland, coming from behind to scrape a 2-1 win over Cairns FC. It was supposed to be a dream homecoming for Innisfail product Steve Corica. But it looked like a full-blown disaster was unfolding when Ryan Cavanah



put Cairns ahead in the 17th minute, lashing a loose ball from a corner into the back of the net -- much to the delight of the nearly 4000-strong crowd at Barlow Park. The hosts rode their luck as long as they could but the Sky Blues equalised through skipper Alex Brosque's penalty the 64th minute, then took the lead three minutes later courtesy of Trent Buhagiar. ... Elsewhere, Chris Lucas bagged a hat trick as Bentleigh Greens routed Broadmeadow Magic 4-0 in Newcastle, while Victorian side Avondale FC ran out convincing 4-1 winners over Devonport City Strikers.

