

# USAIN BOLT.. IS A TRULY GIFTED ATHLETE

The eyes of the world are on the Central Coast right now. Wondering... Could it really be so? Could he actually play professional football? Could we really love a lad Usain?

**Dortmund (Germany)** and Stromsgodset (Norway) decided no. So did Newcastle Jets, apparently.

**Plenty of** clubs around the world (we're told) were interested, but it was the Mariners who won the race (ahem) for his signature. As a triallist.

**It's Usain's** dream, after all, to play for Manchester United so the journey begins, on his 32nd birthday, at Tuggerah.

**But seriously,** he knows how to play football, and wouldn't be here if he wasn't 100 percent committed to taking the journey seriously.

**It's one** thing to kick a ball about as a kid – he is a truly gifted athlete after all, and might even have some touch. But becoming a professional footballer is all about getting on the escalator as a kid and staying there as the pressure intensifies over the years and the places get fewer and fewer.

**You learn** a lot along the way – especially as you make the transition from boy to man. How to take a knock and how to fall. How to go in for, or avoid, a challenge.

**How to** play in accordance with different shapes and strategies.

**Most importantly,** how to know automatically where to be on a football field at any one time. There is always a right place for every player to be in accordance with team shape and strategy, and game context. This takes years to learn (to do it as second nature) and there's no way Usain will have that.

**The 20** years he missed – including that critical period of going from boy to man – can never truly be regained.

**What he** does have is pace.

**Pace is** one of the most important commodities in modern football and pretty much the only thing you can't coach into a player.

**Thing is,** you have to know how to use it (and when not to use it).

**Football is** a game of short sprints – very few long ones – so while it's likely Usain will beat anyone over 10 metres, will he know when to take off? A seasoned pro who does know when to take off will always get there first if Bolt is just one second slower to start.

**And what** will he do if he does get there first? How good is his first touch under pressure? How good is his vision – knowing



where his team mates are before he even gets the ball?

**How good** is his passing – short and long? (Under pressure)

**How good** is his heading and shooting at goal? (Under pressure)

**Can he** stay onside?

**Usain Bolt** is the best there ever was at running in a straight line – with no need

to change direction, avoid other bodies, control a football and do something useful with it while a bunch of players far more experienced try to stop him.

**I am** a Mariners fan and wish him very, very well, but I will run naked around Bluetongue if Usain Bolt gets onto the pitch (as a player) in an A-League match.

# CARL VALERI... "IF YOU DON'T SHOW UP, IF YOU DON'T PLAY WITH THE RIGHT DESIRE, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WIN A MATCH OF FOOTBALL"

Melbourne Victory skipper Carl Valeri has vowed the A-League champions will learn from the "harsh lesson" they were dealt by APIA Leichhardt in their shock FFA Cup defeat.

**Valeri admitted** his team was clearly out-enthused by the NSW NPL outfit, who won 3-2 in Tuesday night's round of 16 clash at Leichhardt Oval in Sydney.

**It will** go down as one of the biggest upsets in the tournament's short history and APIA's finest hour since they won the National Soccer League title in 1987.

the next game."

**Melbourne looked** flat from the outset and were without two players who loom as vitally important to their A-League chances this season – prized marquee signing Keisuke Honda and defensive recruit Georg Niedermeier, who were both

**Two goals** from Japanese striker Tasuku Sekiya and a late header from Nathan Millgate sealed the result, heading off a late comeback from Victory, who had equalised at 2-2 after a Kenny Athiu brace.

**"At the** end of the day, I'm not shocked [by] what happened," Valeri said.

**"It's a** harsh lesson and one we must learn from. Knowing these guys and what kind of people they are, I know we will grasp this lesson and not let go of it and remember it every time we go out into training and into



left at home.

**APIA had** played 120 minutes on Saturday in their penalty shootout defeat to Sydney United in the NPL semi-finals – but they defied their heavy legs to produce a stirring performance that puts them into the FFA Cup's final eight for the first time.

**"That's the** beauty of the cup," Valeri said.

**"They produced** on the day and to be honest, if we did end up winning, we probably would have been a bit lucky because their desire was quite evident.

**"We dominated** for a patch for about 10 minutes in the second half, (otherwise) it was all them."

**Coach Kevin** Muscat was confident it wouldn't derail Victory's preparations for the upcoming season.