



By George Stavroulakis

CONFIRMED: TIM CAHILL TO MAKE ONE LAST SOCCEROOS APPEARANCE V LEBANON IN NOVEMBER

Socceroos great Tim Cahill believes his farewell appearance will be the most emotional match of his stellar career and has described his upcoming stint in India as his last hurrah.



Cahill is set to earn his 108th and final cap in the match against Lebanon at ANZ Stadium in his home city of Sydney on November 20 and said he was surprised at having one more chance to wear the green and gold.

"I don't know exactly what my role is going to be but I don't expect anything, if it's just saying thank you and waving to the fans," he said.

"But if they put me on for five minutes, you know I'm going to go out there (trying) to score, it's in my blood.

"But I'm not going to go out there to hinder the

team in any way in their preparations."

He will shortly be starting a stint with Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League.

Cahill said he consulted a lot of people about India, including former Australian pace bowler Brett Lee who has played extensively in that country. The 38-year-old Cahill has already played in England, China, the United States and Australia in a professional career stretching back to 1998. He has already completed some coaching courses but says he will probably wait till he turns 40 before considering a

coaching position.

The former Melbourne City player said he will be available to consult for A-League sides as a neutral, without being aligned to a particular team. The Socceroos' all-time leading goalscorer was confident Australia had other players capable of scoring goals at international level, including Tomi Juric, Jamie McLaren and Mathew Leckie.

He said he was in regular contact with other national team players including emerging youngster Daniel Arzani, who recently joined Scottish giants Celtic.

NEWCASTLE JETS HAVE SIGNED LEWIS ITALIANO

Newcastle Jets have signed former Wellington Phoenix keeper Lewis Italiano on a one year deal to push his old Kiwi team-mate Glen Moss for the number one slot next season.

A Perth Glory junior, Italiano was part of the squad which finished runners-up in the 2011/12 Hyundai A-League season. After making the move across the ditch at the end of the 2012/13 season, the talented shot-stopper made 19 appearances for Wellington in the A-League between 2013 and 2018. The 27-year-old and Moss have a good relationship already, having spent a number of years fighting for a spot between the sticks at Wellington.

Jets boss Ernie Merrick said Italiano – who joins from NPL WA club Stirling Lions, where he played six games in the middle of the 2018 season – was a strong addition to the squad.

"I know Lewis well from my time at Wellington, and I know what he

can bring to our side," Merrick said. "He's a tremendous physical presence and has all the attributes you look for in a keeper – he's dependable, a quality shot stopper and very good in the air.

"He'll push Glen hard and the competition for a starting position will benefit them both as we embark on a busy year ahead." Italiano said he was pleased to be linking up with familiar faces in Newcastle.

"To have the chance to work with Ernie and Glen again is something I'm really looking forward to," Italiano said. "My game came a long way under Ernie at Wellington, Mossy and I both pushed each other hard over there and being in a similar environment here in Newcastle will help me reach my best. "The team plays an aggressive brand of attacking football which I saw plenty of last season, and hopefully I can do my bit for the fans and help the Jets have another successful campaign."

FFA'S WAR WITH FIFA



FFA's war with FIFA. FFA's war with its own stakeholders. The prospect of a normalisation committee and being turfed out of the Asian Cup. The Socceroos starting life under a coach who divides the fans. Expansion about to delight two and disaffect the rest. And pop music at goal kicks and corners? Some would suggest that Australian football's traditional death wish is simply ratcheting up a notch, but I reckon this could be the best season ever.

There's never a dull moment being an Australian football fan. If we're not defending our honour against rival codes, media bias and Eurosnoobs, we're bound to be facing some other crisis of internal conflict. Just want to talk about the football? That's for wooses!

I shook my head in disbelief last week when Sport Australia saw fit to wade into the FFA v FIFA war. What possible impact could their interference have other than to convince FIFA that a government body was meddling in football politics – the avoidance of which is an article of FIFA faith.

Sport Australia would know absolutely that their efforts would have zero chance of changing FIFA's mind and

every chance of upsetting them (if they need any more reason to be upset with FFA). So why did they do it?

Of course, the AFL/NRL cronies who infest Sport Australia only want the best for Australian football so it makes perfect sense they'd want to make a statement – just in case FIFA didn't think there had been interference.

So if we do get to defend the Asian Cup, it'll be under Arnie – the man loved by half the fans and loathed by the rest. I'm on record as saying I was furious when I heard he'd been appointed at the Mariners. "Not Arnie!" I wailed. "Anyone but Arnie!"

It took him two matches to turn me around. The tightness of his team shape, the brightness of his attacking style and the youthful talent he brought through. The Mariners had three brilliant seasons under Arnie and the team that won the 2013 Grand Final has to be one of the best in A-League history.

He did it again with Sydney FC and broke all records, and now he'll do it with the Socceroos. He'll play 4/2/3/1 with fast overlapping fullbacks getting the ball early to the skilled technical players like Rogic and Arzani who'll be running at defences in disarray instead of trying to unpack the massed parked buses we usually encounter in Asia.

There will be joy for some but disappointment for a lot of teams (and their supporters) when expansion finally happens at the end of October. If I were king of the FFA I'd be trying to surprise and delight the fans by making an announcement out of left field. Four teams for the first phase of expansion (or at least two, and two more the following year). We already have the player depth in the NPL so bring it on! It's one of the few things the FFA could do that would meet with universal approval.