



KEISUKE HONDA MELBOURNE VICTORY

It doesn't take Einstein to realise the Japan international is going to be an excitement machine this season. The beach blonde hair, the wicked free-kicks, the level of expectation, all create one unique individual who'll hopefully deliver. Honda arrives still at a good age too, only 32, fresh from scoring at the 2018 World Cup, so there's no retirement package excuses.



The A-League may have a stale feeling about it but the 2018/19 season, which commences next weekend, has some new blood in the form of foreign recruits offering a touch of freshness to the competition.

FTBL takes a look at seven of the new imports who we think will shine this season.



OLA TOIVONEN MELBOURNE VICTORY

Likewise, there's no secrets about Victory's other glamour signing. The Sweden international also netted recently at the World Cup against no-less than Germany, offering a glimpse into his quality. He's played in the English Premier League along with the Dutch and French top flights, so the striker can cut it at the top.



JAIR NEWCASTLE JETS

The Brazilian has been a nomad around Asian leagues for the past seven years with mixed success but he's only 30 and has reportedly attacked pre-season at Newcastle with genuine intent to impress. Jets assistant Clayton Zane said: "He's two footed, he's sharp, he's got great touches, he can dribble, he's got a bit of everything which really excites me."



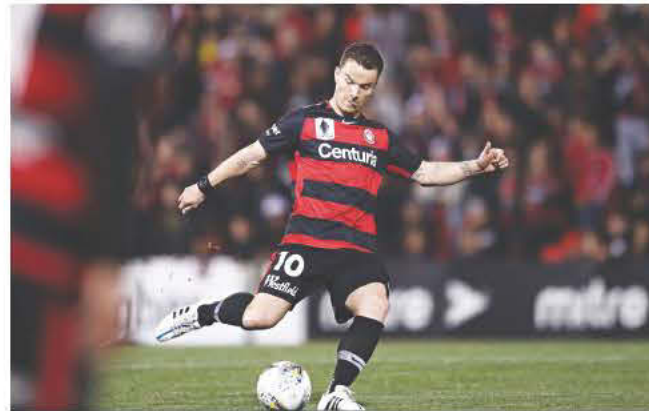
ADAM LE FONDRE SYDNEY FC

We've opted to include the Englishman ahead of teammate Siem de Jong due to his impressive pre-season form. The former Cardiff City striker has scored four goals in Sydney's past four pre-season games, along with two strikes in the FFA Cup. Le Fondre never made it in the English Premier League but, at 31, he's got the scorer's instinct to succeed in the A-League.



MIRKO BOLAND ADELAIDE UNITED

Another player on this list in their 30s, Boland's story is different having spent almost the past decade with one club, Eintracht Braunschweig, before moving to Australia. The midfielder may not be glamorous in terms of style, but Reds fans will appreciate his stamina and work ethic, along with his technical ability. He's impressed in United's cup run.



ALEXANDER BAUMJOHANN WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS

Baumjohann is another German but his route to Australia is very different having left his homeland for Brazil last year where it didn't work out for him. However, the 31-year-old midfielder is a top quality footballer, with amazing pedigree as an ex-Germany youth international who has had spells at Bayern Munich, Hertha BSC and Schalke 04. Working with Markus Babel, might be what he needs.



STEVEN TAYLOR WELLINGTON PHOENIX

The 32-year-old central defender is well known to Australian audiences following more than 200 appearances with Premier League club Newcastle. He means business too and is exactly what Wellington Phoenix needs after finishing ninth last season. Don't expect him to dazzle with skill. Instead he'll be tough and robust, and probably a threat from set pieces.