

Muscat takes the positives from derby defeat

Melbourne Victory manager Kevin Muscat was convinced his side's performance against Melbourne City on Saturday night was a "really good starting point for us".



His comments came despite Victory suffering a first-up defeat, with City coming from behind to win the Melbourne Derby 2-1 thanks to goals from new signings Richie De Laet and Riley McGree.

More than 40,000 fans piled into Marvel Stadium and the majority, including Muscat, were enthralled by an exciting first half from Victory, capped by Keisuke Honda's first Hyundai A-League goal.

A disputed 40th-minute penalty helped City equalise, despite Bruno Fornaroli's spot-kick being saved, with De Laet reacting quickest to net the rebound, before McGree's smart finish settled the contest.

"That 40 minutes before that incident, I thought we were outstanding," Muscat said.

"[It was] total dominance, total control and playing some really attacking and exciting stuff.

"We could sense that things [we] had been working on [were paying off], there was evidence of that, the players began to

draw confidence and belief from that.

"And then to concede the way we did, at the time we did, if anything, gave them some momentum, which I didn't think we deserved that at that point in time."

Even though Victory dropped off after the break, a host of chances still fell their way.

And Muscat said that should encourage fans as Victory look to defend their Hyundai A-League title.

"In the second half, even when it was 1-1, again, we created some really good chances," he said.

"Kosta [Barbarouses] goes through, you know, one-on-one with the keeper, Jimmy [Troisi] hits the inside of the post, it goes agonisingly close, at 2-1 Kenny [Athiu] has a great chance, after performing so well.

"Kenny was outstanding for us tonight.

"We'll continue to work on things and get better. But there was some real positives to start with. A really good starting

point for us.

"Everybody will analyse the result and, yeah, we would have liked to have had a different result, but in terms of the performance, I thought there was some really good stuff from us."

City boss Warren Joyce hailed the collective effort of his side and said the fighting mentality they displayed was something he wanted to see more of.

"Culture is a big word in the country ... we want that throughout the football club," he said.

Joyce, who said that there was "a lot more to come" from new signing De Laet, felt that the decision to award City with a first-half penalty was correct.

And he added that if was a line-ball decision, he felt City were owed some luck.

"I think we've had more than our fair share of bad luck on VAR [video assistant referee] last season," he said.

Taggart eases early Pain as Roar earn entertaining Mariners draw

Adam Taggart added a silver lining to a largely frustrating Brisbane Roar debut as his second-half equaliser rescued a 1-1 home draw with Central Coast Mariners on Sunday. An off-season recruit from Perth Glory, the seven-time Caltex Socceroos striker squandered several glorious chances before sealing a share of the points in the 65th minute of an engaging contest at Suncorp Stadium.

Connor Pain had stunned the hosts with a fourth-minute opener but, on Mike Mulvey's return to Queensland, the new Mariners boss was forced to be content with a handy result in his first match in charge.

Mulvey's dream start against the club he delivered Grand Final success in 2014 came courtesy of a blistering counter-attacked capped by Pain's tidy finish along a greasy surface.

Brisbane set about retrieving the deficit with Taggart passing up several opportunities before half-time, the best an inexplicably wayward finish from Tobias Mikkelsen's cushioned touch in the box.

He was almost made to pay amid the wastefulness as Pain saw a curling effort deflect off Connor O'Toole, against the far post and across the face of goal.

Taggart's frustration initially failed to subside after the interval with Ben Kennedy keeping out a point-blank header and a tight offside call going against him.

But relief finally arrived just beyond the hour as the 25-year-old former Golden Boot winner swivelled on a mishit Stefan Mauk attempt and rifled Roar back to level terms.

Tommy Oar and Eric Bautheac threatened to conjure a winner as the entertainment amped up in the closing moments, but both defences stood tall to leave the Round 1 clash all square.

