

By George Stavroulakis

Merrick blames video refs for VAR farce

Newcastle Jets coach Ernie Merrick blames the operators behind Video Assistant Referees, rather than the system itself, for the controversies this season.

The VAR has been a main talking point after two rounds of the A-League season, notably in the Melbourne and Sydney derbies.

Sydney FC led Western Sydney Wanderers 2-0 in the second-half on Saturday night, before Roly Bonevacia's goal in the 58th minute was overturned by the VAR.

It appeared Chris Beath had initially overturned it for a Jaushua Sotirio foul on Michael Zullo, but he explained after the match that the Wanderers player was offside and interfering with play – although the referee signalled for a direct free kick at the time. And in this year's Grand Final against Melbourne Victory, Merrick's side was a victim of a technical malfunction which allowed an offside goal from Kosta Barbarouses to stand when 30 seconds of crucial video footage went mysteriously missing.

Today the Newcastle boss said the officials

behind the screens at the Sydney Derby were being overly pedantic.

"A lot of people have come up with different ideas with the VAR," Merrick said.

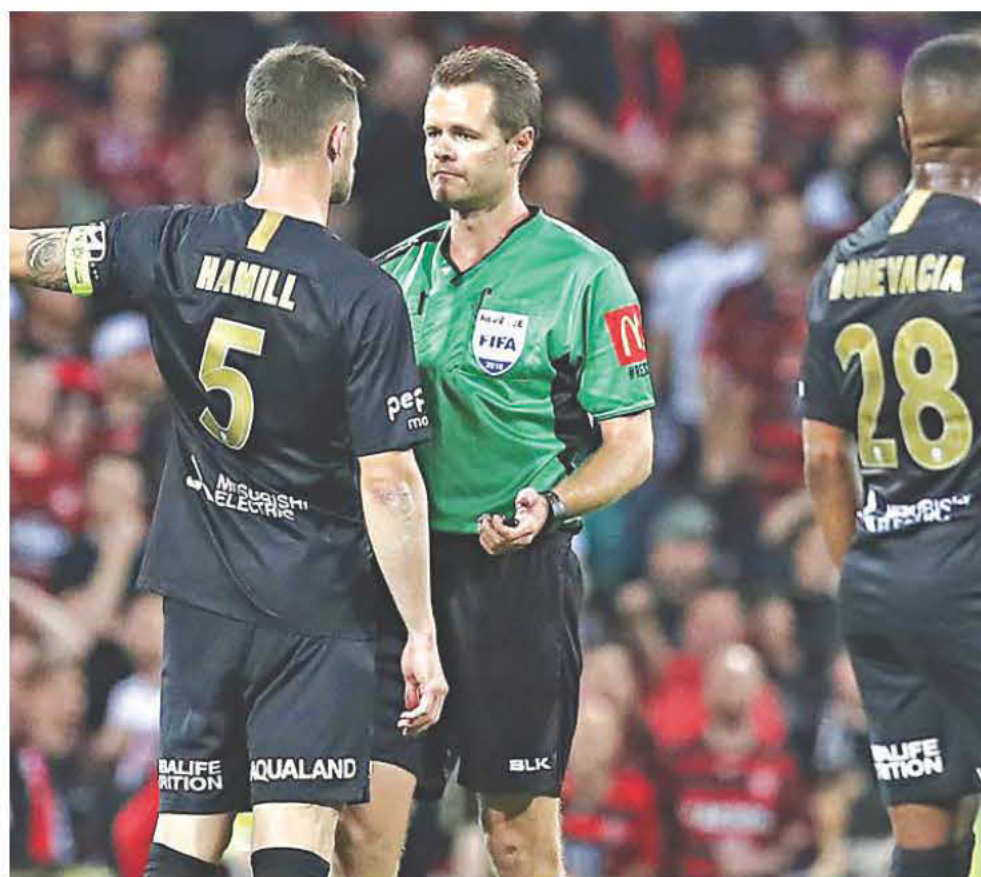
"I don't think the system is a problem, I think it's the operators. It's really the education of the referees, but once again, I don't think the call that was made in the Wanderers match was a good call.

"An offside player did impede a recovering defender, but I don't think he was going to get anywhere near the ball anyway.

"No one really noticed. The Sydney defenders conceded the goal and you can see they didn't worry about it.

"Then they found someone who decided to get really technical and if you get really technical, you'll have about 40 fouls every game."

Wanderers coach Markus Babel reacted



angrily to the decision and was subsequently sent off.

After the match pundit Mark Bosnich slammed the decision on Fox Sports, calling for the VAR to be suspended before the A-League loses the majority of its viewership. "It's got to stop and it's got to stop now,"

Bosnich added.

"I'm telling you now, this has gone beyond tipping point. You are experimenting with players' livelihoods."

Head of A-League Greg O'Rourke told FTBL he would not be commenting on the matter for now.

Chris Beath: Scrubbing out Wanderers goal was correct

Referee Chris Beath fronted the cameras to explain why Western Sydney Wanderers' goal was scrubbed out last night in another contentious ruling involving the VAR.



Just half way through the second round of the new A-League season the video ref has been the main talking point from at least three matches.

In the Sydney Derby at the SCG, the Sky Blues were two up when Roly Bonevacia clawed one back in the 58th

minute only to have the goal scrubbed off.

It sparked an angry reaction from RBB fans in the 30,500 strong crowd and ended in a straight red to Wanderers coach Markus Babel after he exploded on the sideline. Post-match Beath stood by the decision. None of the

match officials clocked the offence at the time which was picked up by the VAR but replays appeared to show a clash between Wanderers Jaushua Sotirio and Sydney FC left back Michael Zullo in the lead up.

Beath told Fox Sports: "So let's make it very clear that

the offence that we've given for is actually offside.

"The attacker is clearly in an offside position and his action impacts on the defender, on Zullo's ability to play the ball."

The referee said he was comfortable with the decision: "From a technical

point of view the offside is the correct decision."

But the decision caused a meltdown on social media and led to impassioned pleas from retired Socceroos Archie Thompson and Mark Bosnich to immediately halt or bin the use of the technology.