

Merrick 'would love' to finish third

Newcastle Jets boss Ernie Merrick says he'd rather finish third on the table this season.

Merrick's team is winless after two weeks into the A-League season, succumbing to a 2-1 loss to Wellington Phoenix in the first round and then a 1-1 draw to Adelaide United last week

The Jets finished second last season and lost the Grand Final to Melbourne Victory 1-0 at home in May.

Today, the Scotsman hinted first or second isn't necessarily the best place to finish on the table.

"Personally I'd love to finish third," Merrick said. "If you finish third, then you get a home final, you don't have to have a weekend off and you can then go all the way through."

"I think the way the league is set up, third would be a good position for us."

"The top two teams, all they get is a weekend off and I don't always think that's a good thing because you lose momentum. "Finishing third is a good position to finish and we have 27 rounds to do that, but it's about picking up points now."

Merrick's side take on Victory on Saturday night at home, but the Newcastle manager wasn't buying into the idea of getting revenge.

He said his side is full of confidence, despite failing to register a win so far this season.

"We're playing better in many ways than



last year, but it's all about collecting three points," he said. "You can talk as much as you like, but it's all about winning games and that's what we're keen to do."

"We've had a horrendous (fixture) draw and the first six games have been very tough, given two away games, two home games against Melbourne and Sydney and then two more away games."

"It is what it is and I think we've got a fairly good picture of where we're at after those six games, albeit after the difficult circumstances."

The 65-year-old fielded the same starting

XI against Wellington and Adelaide and said it was unlikely he would make any changes this weekend.

"Mitch Austin and Kaine Sheppard are pretty keen to get a run up front," the Scotsman said.

"We brought in Nick Cowburn and Ben Kantarovski, so we've got four or five players really pushing for a starting team role."

"I was so happy with our starting XI, I can't see many changes if any, but it's good to see there are boys on the bench keen to get into the starting line-up."



The Whistle: Round 2 refereeing and VAR incidents reviewed

Each week a-league.com.au will be speaking with FFA Director of Referees Ben Wilson to review some of the key refereeing and VAR incidents from the weekend's matches.



In this incident the Newcastle Jets are awarded a defensive free kick for a push in the back on Daniel Georgevski, which occurs before the contact between Glen Moss and George Blackwood. This decision is made by the on-field match officials and the VAR checks the incident and agrees with the on-field decision.

A similar incident occurred in the Melbourne Victory vs Perth Glory match with a clash between Liam Reddy

and Georg Niedermeier. The referee's decision was again checked and deemed correct by the VAR.

Saturday night saw a major talking point in the Sydney Derby.

Law 11 of FIFA Laws of the Game states "In situations where a player moving from, or standing in, an offside position is in the way of an opponent and interferes with the movement of the opponent towards the ball this is an offside offence if it

impacts on the ability of the opponent to play or challenge for the ball."

In this incident when the ball is played to Josh Risdon, Jaushua Sotirio is in an offside position. Sotirio is in the way of Michael Zullo and interferes with his movement towards the ball. It is an offside offence because it impacts on Zullo's ability to challenge for the ball. The VAR recommends an On Field Review. The referee reviews the footage and he disallows

the goal.

Although this technically is the correct decision, having listened to people in the game since Saturday night, we agree that the VAR should have a higher threshold for clear and obvious errors to get the balance right. The VAR should avoid intervening in subjective and technical decisions which are not clearly and obviously wrong and leave those decisions to the on-field match officials. The VARs have been

instructed to apply this position in future.

Finally, on Sunday there was a close offside decision leading to Perth Glory's first goal. After being crossed into the penalty area by Jason Davidson the ball is clearly played by a Melbourne Victory defender (Terry Antonis) before falling to Joel Chianese who scores a fair goal.

The VAR checks the incident and agrees with the on-field decision.