



By George Stavroulakis

## Arnold excited with Socceroos prospects

The next three weeks will be pivotal for Caltex Socceroos hopefuls, with coach Graham Arnold revealing there are around six spots up for grabs in his AFC Asian Cup squad.

**Arnold is** expected to name his squad in three weeks' time for the tournament in January.

**It gives** every player one last chance over the next few weeks to press their claims for a spot in the squad as Australia looks to defend the title they won on home soil in 2015.

**"I've probably** got six spots at the moment, six places where there are questions marks," said Arnold on Tuesday at the unveiling of new a new logo for the Caltex Socceroos.

**"The players** have got three weeks to show me and nail down that position. We will name the squad around the week before Christmas and it will be clear to everyone.

**"There's a** spot in every [position]. It's up to the players to show their performances, to show their form and to show their qualities.

**"I expect** their standards to be high, we expect them to come into camp 100% fit. We are monitoring everything they are doing at

the moment. There will be no surprises."

**Arnold has** been keeping a close eye on performances of players in the Hyundai A-League and admitted there are a host of names in contention to make his squad.

**"The boys** in the A-League are doing exceptionally well," he said.

**"Brandon O'Neill,** Craig Goodwin again, Adam Taggart, although he unfortunately got injured but he'll be fine... Chris Ikonomidis, the list goes on and it's exciting times.

**"The style** we expect to play is with a lot of energy, a lot of legs and the young boys are coming."

**Since he** took the reins following June's FIFA World Cup, Arnold has so far had just the three camps and three matches with his squad to implement his attacking approach.

**Even in** such a short time, Arnold has been impressed with how quickly the players have adapted to the style, confident it will help



Socceroos coach Graham Arnold

bring out Australia's best in the UAE.

**"If there** was one surprise [from the first two camps] it's just how quickly the boys have taken the information in because we've completely changed the style of play and it takes a lot of energy the way we expect to play.

**"All it** took was two or three training sessions

on the pitch.

**"They bought** into what we expect from them and went out and put in two fantastic performances. I'm extremely excited to coach this group of players and we're looking forward to the Asian Cup."

**The Caltex Socceroos'** first pool game is against Jordan on January 6.

## A-League Results ROUND 6

Adelaide United 2 v Brisbane Roar 1  
Central Coast 1 v Sydney FC 2  
Melbourne Victory 4 v Western Sydney Wanderers 0  
Wellington Phoenix 1 v Perth Glory 1  
Melbourne City 3 v Newcastle Jets 0



### A - League table ROUND 6

	Team	GP	Pts	W	D	L	GF	GA	+/-
1	Perth Glory	6	4	2	0	12	7	5	14
2	Melbourne Victory	6	4	0	2	14	7	7	12
3	Sydney FC	6	3	2	1	10	5	5	11
4	Adelaide United	6	3	2	1	10	6	4	11
5	Melbourne City FC	6	3	1	2	8	7	1	10
6	Brisbane Roar FC	6	1	3	2	7	7	0	6
7	Newcastle Jets	6	1	2	3	5	8	-3	5
8	Western Sydney FC	6	1	2	3	6	11	-5	5
9	Wellington Phoenix	6	1	2	3	4	10	-6	5
10	Central Coast Mariners	6	0	2	4	6	14	-8	2

### Round 7 FIXTURES

Friday 7th December

Western Sydney Wanderers v Central Coast Mariners 7:50pm – Spotless Stadium

Saturday 8th December

Sydney FC v Wellington Phoenix 5:35pm – Jubilee Stadium

Melbourne Victory v Adelaide United 7:50pm – Marvel Stadium

Perth Glory v Melbourne City 10pm – NIB Stadium

Sunday 9th December

Newcastle Jets v Brisbane Roar 5pm – McDonald Jones Stadium

## Thomas lauds Honda performances

Gun goalkeeper Lawrence Thomas has revealed exactly how Keisuke Honda's supreme professionalism is fuelling Melbourne Victory's red-hot start to the season.

**Star marquee** Honda is loving life in the Hyundai A-League, scoring four times in six starts and delivering a sparkling series of performances.

**The former** AC Milan man was at his dazzling best in the 4-0 crushing of Western Sydney Wanderers that extended Victory's winning streak to four matches.

**Kevin Muscat's** men

are now just two points shy of leaders Perth Glory and their form is no surprise given the standards Honda is setting on the track.

**"I think** it was maybe the third or fourth round in and he came to me after training, maybe two days after a game," shot-stopper Thomas explained on Wednesday.

**"He said** 'Lawrence, I want to speak to you after training and go through some of your options for playing from the back.'

**"So we** stayed behind for half an hour and he spoke me through some of the options I should be looking for, what to play.

**"He has** a real passion for the game, he's incredibly disciplined.

**"I think** everyone at the club can pick his brain a bit and learn how to get to that top, top level."

**Thomas, 26,** has only been beaten seven times in six outings this season, helping the Champions amass the strongest goal difference of all 10 clubs.

**He and** Honda will have important parts to play when an in-form Adelaide United visit Marvel Stadium at 7:50pm on Saturday night.



Melbourne Victory's Japanese star signing Keisuke Honda