

STAJCIC CONFIDENT WITH WOMEN'S FIFA WORLD CUP DRAW

Matildas coach Alen Stajcic

Westfield Matildas coach Alen Stajcic said improved belief and maturity within his squad has confidence high ahead of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2019.



Australia were drawn alongside Brazil, Italy and Jamaica in Group C at next year's showpiece in a draw.

And speaking after the draw, Stajcic said he was convinced his side had made major steps forward following a quarter-final exit at the 2015 edition of the biggest event in women's football.

"I think the two things that have probably changed the most in our team [since 2015] are a real genuine belief that we can beat anyone on any given day and definitely the maturity in the group," Stajcic told reporters.

"In 2015, we had a core group of players who were 21 or 22 years of age, probably 40-odd, 50-odd caps under the belt, just, sort of becoming, you know, elite professional footballers around the world, on the cusp of becoming key players within their teams.

"We had a good, strong all-round team who were really coming into their own but four years down the track, most of the key players now have between 70 and 100 caps under the belt, 24, 25, 26 years of age, been in the national team for 10 years.

"Most have been to two or three World Cups now and Olympic Games, we've beaten the top nations on earth, we've competed with Olympic gold medallists and World Cup winners and World Cup finalists so the maturity and the belief in the team has gone full circle."

Stajcic added that if his side was consistent throughout the World

Cup that there is "no doubt in my mind that we can be a genuine challenger for the title".

First up is the group stages, though, and Stajcic said Australia's initial opponents present "unique challenges" with their different styles.

"We know Brazil so well and they know us so well. We know what to expect from them. They've got so many superstar players ... that will be a really tough game as they always are against Brazil," he said.

"[We play a] very tough, resilient, pragmatic Italian team ... Jamaica is a team that has emerged, almost from nowhere, and produced a quick, dynamic, explosive team who played really well in their qualifiers.

"They are going to be unique challenges and different playing styles but, you know, if you can't overcome the ability to adapt and change within a tournament, within a game then really we shouldn't be talking about being a threat at a World Cup."

The Westfield Matildas open their FIFA Women's World Cup 2019 campaign against Italy in Valenciennes on June 9 (local time).