



By George Stavroulakis

SOCEROOS VS OMAN PLAYER RATINGS

Graham Arnold's last hit-out before the Asian Cup saw a reunion with former mentor and Socceroos coach Pim Verbeek, now in charge of Gulf Cup champions Oman. An isolated pocket of Aussie fans were the only supporters in attendance, and the eerie silence seemed to manifest in the quality and intensity of the match, which resembled more of a training drill.

The Omanis had conceded just 5 goals in their last 14 games, a record that suggested they'd provide tougher competition than they provided. Instead, an early individual error gifted Australia the lead, and from there the floodgates opened.

Had it not been for the heat, the Socceroos would hardly have broken a sweat as they added four more. This victory will certainly boost confidence ahead of Australia's opener against Jordan, but given the dire quality of the opposition, does the result really mean anything?

Mat Ryan – 7

The youngest player to reach 50 caps for the Socceroos, Ryan marked the milestone with a clean sheet – but in truth, he was a virtual spectator.

Rhyan Grant – 5.5

Underwhelming in attack, mostly passing backwards and sideways, and provided a comedic moment in the first half with a ridiculous foul throw that slipped from his grasp.

Milos Degenek – 7.5

Came forward for a set piece and duly opened his international account, arriving at the front post to flick the ball over Al-Rusheidi and into the far corner.

Relatively untroubled at the back and looked a class above his direct opponents. Bad giveaway in the 70th minute led to a decent chance for the Omanis.

Trent Sainsbury – 7.5

Lovely distribution from the back, with a few sumptuous diagonals finding Behich.

Aziz Behich – 8.5

Really adventurous going forward and his runs provided a major attacking outlet for the team. Behich has nailed down his starting spot at left back, and it's easy to see why. Contributed two direct assists.

Mark Milligan – 7

Fortunate not to be booked early on as he lunged into a tackle. Kept things simple as the anchor at the base of midfield.

Mustafa Amini – 7.5

A positive performance from the Denmark-based midfielder, who was involved in the build-up for two of the goals and was lively before he was substituted for Luongo just after the hour mark.

Awer Mabil – 8

Teed up Ikonomidis' goal with a delicate lob before getting on the scoresheet himself, nutmegging the keeper from six yards after Oman failed to deal with a Behich cross.

Stung the gloves of the keeper with a well-struck free kick in the second half. Very threatening in fits and starts.

Chris Ikonomidis – 8

Scored his first goal for Australia with an excellent first-time finish on the half-volley, and looked at home in the national setup. Had another great chance in the 87th minute after a knock down from Maclaren which he skewed left.

Robbie Kruse – 5.5

A quiet game for the much-maligned winger, who provided plenty of industry but little creativity before he was replaced by Maclaren.

Andrew Nabbout – 7.5

A horrible error Omani fullback Saad Al-Mukhani put the ball on a platter for him inside the first ten minutes, and Nabbout duly obliged with a cool finish into the bottom corner. Had another excellent opportunity in the 63rd minute but he fired narrowly wide.

Substitutes:

Jamie Maclaren – 6

The best opportunity he's likely to get to score his first international goal, and yet his Scott-McDonald-esque drought rolls on. Clearly was not showing for the ball in the fashion his teammates expected, and needs to adjust his off-the-shoulder approach to fit into this system. Set up Ikonomidis for what should have been a goal with a nice cushioned header.

Massimo Luongo – 7

Kept things ticking over in the #6 role, and oozes comfort and class on the ball. In the absence of Mooy, his position as Australia's best midfielder is undisputed.

Jackson Irvine – 8

Added the pick of the goals with a thumping left-footed volley. In brilliant goalscoring form at present, and Australia would do well to capitalise on it.

Martin Boyle – 6

Looked very keen to impress but was often wasteful in possession.



Newcastle Jets 2 Brisbane Roar 2



Brisbane Roar had lost five straight A-League games but avoided making it six in a row by drawing 2-2 with Newcastle Jets last Wednesday.

A-League strugglers Brisbane Roar avoided a sixth straight loss by battling to a 2-2 draw at Newcastle Jets thanks to a late Eric Bautheac header.

Darren Davies' side seemed set to slip to defeat at McDonald Jones Stadium for the second time this season, but they twice hit back to level the scores on Wednesday. **The Jets** took the lead in the fifth minute, Dimitri Petratos seizing on a loose pass to dance past two half-hearted challenges and slot a low finish past goalkeeper Jamie Young.

Petratos almost doubled the hosts' lead in the 33rd minute but his free-kick cracked against the woodwork after beating Young, who kept out Nigel Boogaard's header.

Roy O'Donovan and Boogaard missed

chances after the interval before Adam Taggart struck an equaliser against the run of play in the 65th minute.

Connor O'Toole spun into space in the Jets box and delivered an excellent low cross to the back post, with Taggart on hand to turn home from close range.

But parity lasted less than two minutes with chaos in Roar's area leading to a prone Boogaard squeezing a pass through to O'Donovan to restore Newcastle's advantage.

Roar captain Matt McKay almost stopped the rot for his side but was denied by the post, leaving Bautheac to head home a Nicholas D'Agostino cross to snatch a point with three minutes left.

And the Roar could have won the game in the closing stages with Jets goalkeeper Lewis Italiano having to be alert to make good saves from Dylan Wenzel-Halls and Taggart.

A-League 11 Round

DATE	HOME	AWAY	VENUE	Kick-Off (AEDT)
Friday, 4 January 2019	Sydney FC	Central Coast Mariners	Jubilee Stadium	7:50PM
Saturday, 5 January 2019	Adelaide United	Wellington Phoenix	Coopers Stadium	5:35PM
Saturday, 5 January 2019	Western Sydney Wanderers FC	Melbourne Victory	ANZ Stadium	7:50PM
Sunday, 6 January 2019	Melbourne City FC	Newcastle Jets	AAMI Park	5:00PM
Sunday, 6 January 2019	Brisbane Roar FC	Perth Glory	Suncorp Stadium	7:00PM