

JOHN ALOISI... OFF FIELD PROBLEMS..

FTBL dives into John Aloisi's career to find out whether the Socceroo legend's lack of public popularity ever quite matched up with his coaching exploits. "Things will change," a pained Aloisi said in a recent press conference, the desperation tangible in his voice.



It was the sort of generic exclamation one would expect from an under-pressure coach, but the Socceroo legend's expression forecasted a greater sense of responsibility.

"For the past three and a half years, I have given every minute of my life to make the Brisbane Roar a success," Aloisi said in a statement.

"Upon reflection of the current situation, I have made the difficult decision to stand down effective immediately as I believe this is in the best interest of the playing group and football club."

He knew that Brisbane's board were still backing him, but also that for the past four seasons results had been going backwards. He was going to jump before he was pushed.

Inconsistency

Public staff fallouts and threatened lawsuits one moment, one point from Premiers the next.

Wrangling with a divisive ownership group and plummeting attendances, only to qualify for Asia and see the numbers literally peel off the back of their shirts.

For John Aloisi, what happens in Brisvegas, hopefully stays in Brisvegas. Towards the end he was beginning to seem like a drunkard gambler, chasing his losses in the city where A-League dreams are either made, crushed, or quite often, both.

The story so far

Aloisi never had it easy at the Roar, which made his strong results over the first two seasons at the club all the more impressive.

In 2015, prompted by the first round of unpaid wages and outstanding creditor debts, Brisbane's

owners, the Bakrie Group, were revealed to be over \$9 billion in debt.

The FFA threatened to wind up the group's involvement – which may explain the lack of considerable investment from the Indonesian owners over the ongoing years – yet despite continued off-field issues, no such action has been forthcoming.

Meanwhile, Brisbane's average attendance dropped from 14,152 in 2016/17, to a miserly 9,214 – the second lowest average in the club's history, and one of the largest single-season declines in A-League records – by 2017/18.

It was a better story this season, with averages currently hovering over the 12,000 mark, but how long it could have lasted with the club stuttering in ninth position is unclear. Nevertheless, it's also a far sight from the over-18,000 Brisbane were getting in 2013/14, before many of these ownership issues became public.

Last season Aloisi presided over an inconsistent squad with eight players over 30-years-old, leading to a series of intermittent injuries that devastated any hint of cohesiveness.

Brett Holman, Eric Bautheac, Jade North and Ivan Franjic were just a few of the persistent concerns, a problem that hadn't escaped the Roar management.

This season – while Holman has again failed to make a blip – there were very few injuries to blame. Another season of poor transfer dealings behind them, there were serious questions placed on Brisbane and the Aloisi brothers' recruitment strategy.

That's on the field, but there were no shortage of problems off it.

Off field problems, in addition to Aloisi's early success at the club, lead to scrutiny being deflected from the former Socceroo, with vice-chairman Chris Fong acknowledging last year that Brisbane hadn't offered their coach enough support.

Disagreements between Aloisi and former managing director, Mark Kingsman led to Kingsman's sacking early last year, with outsourced medical and conditioning departments a source of major concern.

Then there was the nomadic training ground debacle as the club scraped through matches without an official practice pitch for much of 2017.

Things devolved this season despite the high-profile signing of Adam Taggart, whose missed-chances and staggering injury concerns arguably played as big a role in Brisbane's results as any other factor.

Statistics

Aloisi never missed the finals at the Roar, but finished third, third and sixth. In his 95 games – the most for any Roar coach – he lost 34, won 37 and drew 24. He was eliminated in the Round of 32 in every FFA Cup.

His season-starting performances devolved noticeably. In the first nine rounds of his four A-League seasons at the Roar, he won four, three, two and one matches respectively.

The last three matches of Aloisi's tenure were the worst; statistically, Brisbane sit last in the league for almost every category, except goals scored, for which their seventh.

Where does his future lie?

While Ross Aloisi appears to be sticking in

the assistant role for the time being, Darren Davies – former Welsh U/21 international and coach at the Queensland Academy of Sport – will lead the club against Sydney FC.

Aloisi showed enough in his first two seasons at the Roar – in somewhat difficult circumstances – to earn another A-League head coaching role.

With two new clubs set to enter the league, if nightmares of Melbourne Heart can be quickly extinguished from the memory, Aloisi's coaching career should be secure.

Another obvious option appears the Central Coast Mariners, should Mike Mulvey continue to fail. In particular, Aloisi's sensational ability to mold Jamie Maclaren into one of the most prolific strikers in A-League history will be highly regarded.

But whether he has the fortitude to turn around a club's fortune in a dismal position is far less certain, he's shown twice now he struggles when things go against him.

It's worth noting that for the first two seasons at Brisbane he boasted a balanced squad brimming with talent – the likes of Maclaren, Matt McKay, Thomas Broich and Dimitri Petratos.

As soon as his side aged or diminished, as with his time at Melbourne Heart, the football quickly followed suit.

Then there's his competition, not to mention the growing chorus for NPL coaches to be given a go following Mark Rudan's success at Wellington Phoenix. Rudan, Ernie Merrick, Marco Kurz, Tony Popovic, Kevin Muscat, even Mulvey's a former Championship winning coach – the A-League's upper half have a growing plethora of options at their disposal.

JIM PATIKAS AND ALEX FERGUSON

Former Socceroo legend Jim Patikas talks to FTBL about what it was like being coached by Alex Ferguson during his short stint with Aberdeen.

Before taking charge of Manchester United, Alex Ferguson was manager of Aberdeen, where he won three Scottish league championships and also took Scotland to the 1986 World Cup.

In that time one of Australia's greatest attacking players, Jim Patikas, had a brief spell at Aberdeen where he was mentored by Ferguson.

Patikas is mostly known for his decade long career in Greece which included playing seven seasons with AEK Athens where he won three League Championships.

While at AEK, Patikas made history by becoming the first Socceroo to play in the UEFA Champions League and first player to represent the Soccerroos while based at a non-Australian club.

