



By George Stavroulakis

SOCZEROOS STUNNED BY JORDAN

The Socceroos have started their AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019™ campaign with a defeat, going down to Jordan 1-0 at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium on Sunday night.

Despite dominating for large periods, Graham Arnold's side were undone by Anas Bani Yaseen's first-half header.

Australia laid siege to Jordan's goal after the break but were continually denied what would have been a deserved equaliser by some desperate defending.

Awer Mabil hit the post as the Socceroos created chance after chance in the second half, with Chris Ikonmidis, Jackson Irvine and Tom Rogic all going close.

But it wasn't to be Australia's day, with Graham Arnold's side to now quickly turn their focus to Friday night's second group match against Palestine.

The Socceroos enjoyed plenty of possession in the early stages, with Jordan content to sit back and denied Australia space around their box.

Awer Mabil was looking the most threatening and almost gave Australia the lead on 13 minutes, getting in behind the Jordan defence on the left but his shot was well stopped by the keeper.

The let-off seemed to give Jordan a boost and they would go on to take the lead on 25 minutes.

Bani Yaseen managed to break free from his defender at a corner, planting an unstoppable header into the top corner of the net.

And the Socceroos had keeper Maty Ryan to thank for not falling further behind soon after.

Bahaa Abdulrahman hit a rasping free-kick from the edge of the box which was headed for the top corner, only for Ryan to produce a stunning fingertip save, tipping the ball onto the crossbar and away.

Rhyan Grant replaced Josh Risdon at right-back at the break and Australia immediately got on the front foot as they chased an equaliser.

And it almost came just after the hour mark as Tom Rogic let fly from 25 metres out with his shot spilled by the keeper, before substitute Chris Ikonmidis just failed to turn in the rebound.

It began a period of concerted pressure from Australia as they pushed Jordan back and probed for an opening.

Rogic could have done better 19 minutes from time when he was on the end of Aziz Behich's low cross, but the Celtic playmaker fired over the bar.

Australia went even closer soon after



Salem Al-Ajalin of Jordan celebrates past dejected Massimo Luongo (R) and Mark Milligan of Australia after Anas Bani Yaseen of Jordan scored his team's goal during the AFC Asian Cup Group B

when Mabil made space for himself inside the box and rifled off a vicious strike which cannoned onto the post.

It was wave after wave of Socceroos attack now and Ikonmidis was again involved in the thick of the action, with his goal-bound header hacked off the line by a defender.

The Socceroos did have the ball in the net with four minutes left through Jamie Maclaren, only for the striker to be denied his first international goal by an offside flag.

Ikonmidis was denied again in stoppage-time as Jordan held on for a famous win.

MILLIGAN BELIEVES SOCCEROOS DID NOT PANIC

Mark Milligan insisted that the Socceroos 1-0 loss to Jordan wasn't due to nerves, merely the opposition's defensive style.

Anas Bani Yaseen's goal proved the difference, despite Australia registering over 75% possession, Jordan held strong for a 1-0 win at Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium.

The Chivalrous took the lead through a corner, Bani Yaseen bursting past Massimo Luongo, finding space and bulleting a header into the near post. It wasn't Jordan's only chance; Ahman Ersun rippled the side netting in the second half, nearly catching Mat Ryan unawares.

Jordan were very strong in the first half and proved dangerous the entire way through, with Vital Borkelman's counter-attacking philosophy working dividends against the Socceroos.

Australia huffed and puffed but offered relatively little, the majority of clear-cut chances occurring towards the final minutes of the match, when Graham Arnold's side threw everything at the Jordanians and piled lofted balls into the box.

Both sides had potential handball penalties waved away, while Jamie Maclaren was largely out-muscled and withdrawn in the number nine role.

«**The start** of the game was lethargic, maybe a few nerves,» Milligan said. «It's the first time in a tournament situation for some of the boys.

«**We knew** where their dangers were going to come from and on a set-piece, we can't be conceding those goals.

«**We know** we need to be better, but there's still good signs, we know we have to execute better.»

The Socceroos were widely criticised for their route-one attacking, with little combination play resulting in chances, but Milligan insisted it wasn't a lack of preparation.

«**I don't** think we panicked,» he said. «It's hard to keep your patience when a team is sitting deep and giving you that ball to play. I think it will be alright.

«**I'm lucky** I've got a great bunch of boys, this will



Socceroos captain Mark Milligan