



Ernie Merrick fined for VAR bias outburst

Newcastle Jets coach Ernie Merrick has been slapped with a \$3000 fine after accusing the A-League video referees of bias.

Merrick, whose team was coming off a morale-boosting 3-1 win over Melbourne City on Friday was brought back to earth for some earlier comments

The Jets coach lashed out following a 2-0 away loss to Perth Glory in Round 16 when a number of penalty shouts by his team were waved away.

“The guy in the VAR was having a cup of tea,” Merrick said post-match.

“He didn’t have a chance to look at it, probably fell asleep. When does the VAR change anything nowadays? With the handball it just depends which referee you’ve got, the referees are all different. Some give some don’t.

“If it’s against us it’d be given, we’ve had four penalties against us and we haven’t got a penalty this year.

“The Roy O’Donovan one, he was wrestled to the ground, it was pretty blatant, but I don’t know who looked at it but as I say I don’t think the guy in the VAR really changes any decisions nowadays. They’ve gone from one extreme to the other. I’ve got nothing to say about referees, the best team won the game and we couldn’t score goals.”

The Jets were awarded their first penalty of the season in the following round when they thrashed Western Sydney Wanderers 5-1.

Football Federation Australia fined Merrick for breaching the National Code of Conduct and said the coach had until February 25 to appeal the decision.

But a reversal seems unlikely given the FFA’s statement: “In determining the appropriate sanction, FFA took into account a range of factors, including that this was not Merrick’s first breach of the Code.”

Ante Milicic appointed Westfield Matildas Head Coach



Football Federation Australia (FFA) today confirmed that experienced Australian coach Ante Milicic will lead the Westfield Matildas at the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup in France.

Milicic, who has been an integral part of Australia’s national team coaching staff since 2014, has been appointed Head Coach of the Westfield Matildas through to the completion of this year’s tournament, and will oversee his first three matches with the squad in the coming weeks when FFA hosts the inaugural Cup of Nations in Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne.

The highly regarded forty-four-year-old has been appointed in the lead Westfield Matildas role having attained a vast array of experience at international level over the past five years. In addition to serving as an Assistant Coach at two FIFA World Cups under Ange Postecoglou (2014) and Bert van Marwijk (2018), Milicic helped Australia win the 2015 AFC Asian Cup on home soil. Milicic has also mentored the Australia U-23 National Team and was recently the Head Coach of the Young Socceroos.

Milicic’s full focus and time will now shift to the Westfield Matildas as he leads the team at this year’s FIFA Women’s World Cup, where Australia will face Italy, Brazil, and Jamaica in Group C.

“It is an honour to be appointed Head Coach of the Westfield Matildas and I am determined to make the most of this opportunity together with the squad and staff,” Milicic said.

“As demonstrated throughout the Westfield W-League this season, which culminated in Saturday’s thrilling Grand Final in Sydney, Australia has many fantastic players right now and I know that the squad that is ultimately selected will be eager to seize its chance in France.

“With three matches coming up in quick succession at the Cup of Nations, the friendly tournament will provide our group with the opportunity to set its standards both on and off the pitch as we look ahead to the FIFA Women’s World Cup with great

belief and optimism,” he said.

FFA Chairman, Mr Chris Nikou, believes Milicic will bring tremendous qualities to the post.

“Ante [Milicic] has been involved in Australian football at the elite level for many years,” Nikou said. “While he is highly regarded from a technical standpoint, he is also exceptionally knowledgeable in the development and implementation of high-performance football environments, and understands the Australian sporting and football culture.

“FFA is delighted to provide Ante – who has served a long apprenticeship in the game at both club and national team level – with the opportunity to lead the Westfield Matildas in France,” he said.

FFA Chief Executive Officer, Mr David Gallop AM, said that Milicic stood out from a high-calibre list of applicants keen to secure the prestigious position.

“There was no shortage of exceptional Australian and international applicants interested in this elite role. Ante’s intimate involvement with our National Teams Unit over the past five years ensured that he will commence the position with a clear understanding of the systems in place, and with sound relationships with key technical, backroom, and administrative staff already forged.

“Additionally, Ante is acutely aware of the level of detail required to prepare for and compete at a FIFA World Cup, as well as the demands that will come from not only the players, but many important stakeholders including the media, commercial partners, FIFA, and FFA. Having experienced two men’s World Cups in the past, that gives us confidence that Ante will be able to deal with the demands and lead the group with distinction,” Gallop said.