

MARK RUDAN: PHOENIX 'CHIPPING AWAY' AT HISTORY

Wellington Phoenix coach Mark Rudan has hailed his history-making side after they battered Central Coast Mariners 8-2 on Saturday night.



The Kiwi outfit is turning into coach killers with Mariners boss Mike Mulvey axed overnight. Earlier in the season John Aloisi resigned his post when Brisbane Roar were humbled by the Nix.

The result sees Rudan's men grab fourth place on goal difference and puts paid to talk that Wellington have run out of puff heading into the home straight.

"The expectations have grown since the start of the season because of what we are doing," Rudan said post-match.

"It's another record, it's another bit of history created again. We got 23,000 in Auckland which was a record, we went 10 unbeaten – a record – and again tonight we scored more goals this football club has ever before. We keep chipping away."

The A-League record-equalling score line at Central Coast Stadium saw red hot striker Roy Krishna grab a brace and go joint top with Sydney FC's Adam Le Fondre in the Golden Boot race.

With the Nix storming towards a home final Rudan called on Nix fans to respond in numbers and pack the stadium for their last three home games of the season.

"I think tonight gave you the answer about what we're about," he said. «There was absolutely nothing that's going to stop us or get our way this season.

"A lot of neutral fans out there who enjoy watching our football team play – a dynamic brand of football. We're at home next week and we're looking to fill that stadium and get it loud and rowdy and we want big numbers.

"We just want the fans now to come out in big numbers, with three home games remaining in Wellington, to get right behind the players because they're doing their bit." Rudan praised his players' killer streak and could be heard on the sideline calling for them to be more «ruthless».

And despite some bright opening exchanges from the home side they went down to a Sam Graham own goal in the 8th minute before the flood gates opened.

A double from Krishna (12', 45+1') and Sapreet Singh (57', 88') and goals to David Williams (21'), Liberato Cacace (51') and Louis Fenton (59') made it a night to savour for the visitors.

Jack Clisby (61') and Stephen Mallon (69') clawed two back for the Mariners, but it was little consolation.

Despite the avalanche of goals it was a missed opportunity that said everything you needed to know about the tigh-knit Nix, Rudan said.

Late in the match substitute Cillian Sheridan, who was on goal, passed to Krishna who was sweating on a hat-trick. Rudan added: «That moment in particular tells you everything about us as a football club. We are together, we're a team, it's a team effort.

«Cillian easily could have got his first for the season, for the football club, he was desperate to get his first and yet he still tried to put it on a plate for Roy because it was about somebody else.»

MILICIC FIRMLY FOCUSED ON WORLD CUP

Australia lifted the inaugural Cup of Nations on Wednesday night in Melbourne after going through the tournament undefeated and conceding just a single goal.

However, the 3-0 scoreline against Argentina at AAMI Park didn't reflect the closeness of the match between the world no.6 and no.36 nations.

Argentina challenged the Matildas throughout the game and if they were a team who had more international experience under their belt, it could have been a different result.

Milicic made a host of changes to the squad which beat the Korea Republic 4-1 in Brisbane while central defender Laura Alleway was forced from the field with an ankle injury early on, leaving the Matildas with a make-shift defence.

«I thought we were sluggish from the start but very slow in our build-ups, slow in shifting the ball and moving the opposition,» Milicic said.

«We weren't decisive in our passing and our decisions, probably need to work on our positioning higher up the pitch.

«I think at the same time we were a little bit naive as well, we played a game I think they were after, so disappointed in a couple of areas but overall I'm pleased how the last 10 days have gone.»

It's been rollercoaster three months for the Matildas and those involved with the squad



since the abrupt sacking of Alen Stajcic in January, just five months out from their opening World Cup match.

Milicic, who was only appointed as the interim head coach on February 18, took his first training session five days before the Cup of Nations began with the round-robin tournament used to help him and the Matildas begin their World Cup preparations.

«We just want to provide an environment

where these girls have the best possible chance to go as deep in that World Cup tournament as possible,» he said.

«This is what this tournament was about, it wasn't about getting results, yes they are important and we want to win every game we go into but looking at the overall big picture this tournament was to prepare ourselves for the World Cup and that's what we're firmly

focussed on.»

So far the former right-hand man to Ange Postecoglou has implemented small changes to the squad's style of play including an emphasis on keeping possession and playing it out from the back at all costs.

This style works wonders against teams who are willing to give the Matildas space but when teams press them as Argentina did, then passing has to be 100 per cent accurate or the ball will be lost in important areas.

It's was always known that the 44-year-old wouldn't have a lot of time to prepare ahead of the World Cup.

The Matildas have just 93 days until their first group match against Italy in Valenciennes with just one more friendly on the cards at the moment, that being against the USA next month.

There are high expectations for Australia heading into France. The Matildas are currently ranked in the top 10 in the world and have reached the quarter-finals of the last three World Cups.

However, Milicic assured that the side will be ready come June 9.

«Make no mistake by the time the World Cup starts this will be a well-prepared side,» Milicic said.