



NEW AUSSIE STRIKER: 'INTER MILAN TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING'

Meet Reno Piscopo: an exciting new name who's been refined at Italian giant Inter Milan, but is primed to give Australia's attacking stocks a big boost.

Livewire Aussie striker Piscopo says a decade in the hothouse of Italian football - including playing for Inter Milan's youth and the Italian national junior team - equips him well to supercharge the Olyroos attack on the Road to Tokyo 2020.

Piscopo, now 20, has been immersed in the intense football culture of Italy for half his life.

He joined Inter Milan's junior academy in 2012 aged 12, training with the Nerazzurri while playing for a feeder club before Inter brought him in to play for their academy team in tournaments around Europe.

Before that though, with the privately-run Genova International School of Soccer (GISS), he trained with AS Roma and spent time with Vicenza, where he won their best player and top goalscorer in the local tournament that alerted Inter.

For the last two seasons, the Melbourne-born talent dropped down to the more physical but still tactical Serie C (Group B with Renate, currently 15th in the league).

This was to get regular game time, but the former Coburg and Fawkner junior says Inter Milan has laid the foundation for his exciting, proactive style of attacking play.

"It was just unbelievable, the facilities and the places you go when you play for Inter as a youngster," he told FTBL near the Olyroos base in Kuala Lumpur.

"I took my chances and signed young in Italy and I've developed the Inter Milan way.

"They've taught me what they know and what they think is best, and it's helped my game a lot, in my attacking and my defending.

"I've had the Italian experience, the Italian school of soccer you could say. Learning to play different positions, learning how to defend better, learning how

to move without the ball."

Piscopo (known as "Il Canguro") has spent almost half his life living on his own in Italy. It's forced him to grow up as a player and a person.

"I love Melbourne, home's home but I've sacrificed a lot for my career," he said.



"It was a big deal at the start, signing with Inter. It's an option that you can't say no, it's a once in a lifetime opportunity.

"I said I'd go for a year and see how it is. I wanted to come back after a month because I was so young and didn't know the language.

He's stuck it out and become more versatile, starting as a winger, but now being able to play as a 10 and even as a left-central midfielder.

That determination, as well as his blistering pace and

technique, caught the eye of Olyroos boss Graham Arnold. The Olyroos are in the Malaysian capital for a camp and two friendlies ahead of their first round of Olympics qualifiers in Cambodia later this month.

Right now, the Olyroos brand is in desperate need of a boost after having failed to qualify for the last two Olympics.

But, the current U/23 incarnation, with wingers Piscopo and Daniel Arzani from Celtic, plus J-League-based central striker Pierce Waring, has an exciting feel to it in the final third.

With Arnold as dual Olyroos and Socceroos coach, Piscopo's aware that he could transition into a national team player over the 2022 World Cup cycle, as Arzani did in 2018.

"All it takes is six months to do well and doors can open, or doors can close if things don't go well," Piscopo continued.

"I got to a certain age and I was doing well for Inter and got picked for Italy's national junior team, and that gives you respect when you go into camp.

"It was more just for my development, playing against Spain, France, and other big nations.

"But I got to a certain age and it was like, 'Yes, now I want to play for Australia'. I remember going to Bahrain with the Young Socceroos and being with the Aussie boys, it just felt right for me.

"One day I hope to get the chance to play for the Socceroos. That's my dream. And I can't wait to get on the pitch with Arnie, see his ideas and learn off him and get advice off him.

"That's what I'm looking forward to and of course, winning for the Olyroos."