



By George Stavroulakis

## → APOLOGY TO ALEN STAJCIC FROM HEATHER REID

I apologise unreservedly for the damage, distress and hurt that I have caused to Alen Stajcic as a professional football coach and long-time servant to, and advocate for, Australian and women's football. I understand that my conduct in making public and private statements may have caused serious damage to Mr Stajcic's reputation, both in Australia and internationally.

On 22 January 2019 The Sydney Morning Herald published a story about the termination of Mr Stajcic's contract by Football Federation Australia (FFA), in which I was quoted as saying that if people knew the actual facts about Mr Stajcic's behaviour 'they would be shocked.'

I also, at around this time, sent personal communications to a number of people including various members of the media, in which I suggested that, if the whole truth could be told, Mr Stajcic would never work again in women's football. I



understand also that these communications ended up in the hands of other journalists who have used my words to compound the speculation and innuendo as to the reason why Mr Stajcic's employment was terminated.

I withdraw my statements entirely and unconditionally. Mr Stajcic's contract was terminated by FFA, by a decision of the FFA Board, of which I am a member. FFA elected to terminate Mr Stajcic's employment

contract by it making a payment in lieu of notice. Mr Stajcic's contract was not terminated by FFA for breach of contract by Mr Stajcic, or because of any misconduct on Mr Stajcic's part. I accept that I was wrong to imply otherwise.

I regret making these statements. I apologise also for pain and suffering that I have caused to Mr Stajcic's wife and two young children.

Heather Reid



Ultra Football Team of the Week and Round 13 sees a couple of fresh new faces gracing our journalist's starting eleven.

Most notably two goal heroes Lewis Miccio from Manly United FC and Daniel Bragg from Blacktown City FC.

Marconi Stallions FC's Roberto Speranza also makes an appearance after a quality performance over the weekend along with scoring a rare goal while Blacktown City FC's Lachlan Campbell gains a mention for a good performance at Edensor Park.

Usual suspects and we're talking about the Wollongong Wolves Football Club pairing of Thomas James and Takeru Okada continue to dominate the headlines with yet another five star performance from the pair while Sydney Olympic FC's Alejandro Sanchez, although being injured late in the match last weekend, proved a right handful at Belmore Sports Ground.

## FFA enjoying taste of Western United spice

**A-League head** Greg O'Rourke says Mark Rudan's Melbourne derby jibe is what he wants to see from the new A-League club Western United.

**Western United's** in-your-face attitude and industrial A-League brand has met with head office approval but there's growing uncertainty about a move-in date for their new stadium.

**The new** A-League club, which announced Mark Rudan as coach last week, will begin life next season and play out of Geelong's GMHBA Stadium while building a privately-owned venue in Tarnait.

**Club officials** publicly maintain they'll set up house for the 2021/22 season but that prospect is growing more remote.

**Almost six** months on from winning the bid with ambitious promises of fast-tracked permits, there's been no turning of soil, as project managers deal with on-site issues.

**Chief executive** Maurice Bisetto said the club wasn't ready to give up on it and was carrying on its stadium design while navigating the planning process.

"It is an optimistic timetable but we're still on track to achieve that," he told AAP.

"We have a lot of stakeholders working hard

with us to achieve that goal."

**FFA chief** Greg O'Rourke said he was comfortable with the progress, saying they'd banked on a 2022/23 move-in.

"I've seen project plans, the drawings, they're all recently dated with all the different work going on," he said.

"They're keeping me up to speed with all the challenges... when we speak to the project people from the Council, they all remain ambitious."

**A privately-funded** stadium was central to FFA's decision to award Western United the A-League licence.

**Bisetto said** GMHBA Stadium would make an "absolutely great" interim home for at least eight of their 13 home games.

"In so far as playing football on an oval, it would be one of the better ones in the country to play on," he said.

**Discussions with** Mars Stadium in Ballarat and other venues are ongoing to house the club's remaining fixtures.

**Rudan made** a splash on his arrival at the club, saying the established Melbourne Victory-Melbourne City derby lacked atmosphere.

**O'Rourke said** he welcomed the added spice.



"It's exactly what we need to do," he said. "When I was speaking to Melbourne City throughout (the expansion) process, they were asking me 'why are you putting another team in Melbourne when there are already two?' I said, 'putting a third one in will make you better,'" he said.

"I like Western United's approach as being a working class team... being industrial.

"That will be a point of difference between them and the other two teams in Victoria. "Them and the Wanderers returning to their new stadium are two really exciting good news stories for the A-League."

**O'Rourke said** Western United had met all of its license payments, which translates to sending more than \$15 million to FFA coffers.