

MILLIGAN STILL IN SOCCEROOS' PLANS... ARNOLD



As far as Socceroos coach Graham Arnold is concerned, captain Mark Milligan remains a key component of his plans for the World Cup 2022 qualifying campaign.

Milligan admitted he would think about his international future following the Socceroos' disappointing Asian Cup quarter-final exit to the United Arab Emirates in January.

Released by Scottish club Hibernian in May, the 33-year-old wasn't a part of Arnold's squad for the friendly against South Korea in June.

He has however recently joined English League One club Southend United and Arnold says the issue of international retirement hasn't been discussed between him and the 79-cap veteran.

"It's one step at a time for Mark. We haven't had a conversation around that issue at all," Arnold said.

"He's at Southend. He felt the best thing for his career was to be in a league where they play 50 games a year, where he will continue to play all the time.

"He made that decision and we support him with it."

Milligan, who has already played in four World Cups for Australia, will be 37 by the time the next tournament begins in Qatar in November 2022.

Arnold said Milligan will be one of several players he links up with ahead of the start of Australia's World Cup qualifying

campaign in September during a trip to Europe in the coming weeks.

The Socceroos coach leaves Australia next week and will visit players in Denmark, Holland and England during his travels.

He's also keeping a close eye on several Socceroos' aspirants ahead of the qualifiers including striker Adam Taggart.

The ex-Brisbane Roar forward is topping the goalscoring charts for Suwon Bluewings in South Korea's K-League and came off the bench for the Socceroos in the 1-0 loss to Korea in Busan.

"It's great to see Adam Taggart doing fantastic in South Korea," Arnold said.

"We're watching and monitoring the players on their performance but also the minutes they're playing and their fitness as well. At the moment the boys are in great shape."

The draw for the second stage of Asian World Cup qualifying will be held in Malaysia on Wednesday evening with Australia one of 40 nations in the pot.

Eight groups of five teams will be drawn with the group winners and four runners-up to progress to the final stage of qualifying.

GALLOP QUILTS THE FFA

Football Federation Australia chief Executive David Gallop has confirmed he will quit the job at the end of the year, ending months of speculation.

The announcement follows in the wake of last year's boardroom coup which saw former chairman Steven Lowy unseated and replaced by new chair Chris Nikou.

It sparked a wave of change at the governing body including the move to create the new independent A-League and W-League body, owned and run by the clubs.

That's set to go through in time for the start of this season if a final deal can be arranged by the end of this month.

But it will leave the FFA with a much reduced budget and set of responsibilities – and Gallop as CEO, believed to be on around \$1.5m a year – will no longer have the same role as previously.

One of Lowy's last acts as FFA chairman was to sign off a new two year deal for Gallop to guarantee his position under the new regime, but the reduced FFA footprint no longer makes his position viable.

Today Gallop confirmed his exit and set the date for New Year's Eve.

"It has been an honour to lead FFA for the last seven years," said Gallop today.

"With the NLWG recommendations to bring about fundamental changes to Australia's professional competitions – the

Hyundai A-League, Westfield W-League and Foxtel Y-League (the Leagues) and FFA, the chief executive's role as it currently exists will be a very different, narrower role.

"It makes sense for everyone to have time to openly determine what that new role and new leadership looks like."

Gallop joined the FFA in 2012 to replace former CEO Ben Buckley and arrived from the NRL as the A-League enjoyed a crest of the wave success with the arrival of Western Sydney Wanderers and big name stars like Alessandro Del Piero, Shinji Ono and Emile Heskey.

But critics claim he allowed the league to stagnate over the ensuing years, stifling growth and causing friction with fans.

He presided over a series of crises, including the fan ban, the Matildas going on strike over pay negotiations, the sacking of Alen Stajcic and the ongoing saga with crowd figures and TV ratings which have put the value of the next TV rights deal in doubt.

Gallop also was behind the sacking of Holger Osieck and Ange Postecoglou's exit after both had qualified the Socceroos for consecutive World Cups, only see the team crash out at the group stage both times.

During his seven-year reign, he was boss of four different Socceroos coaches and four different Matildas coaches. A-League attendances peaked in 2013 before falling back to the same level as when he joined the FFA.

But his era also saw Australia host and win the 2015 Asian Cup, as well as qualifying for the 2014 and 2018 World Cups and the 2015 and 2019 Women's World Cups, and achieve record participation numbers.

"It has been very satisfying to be part of so many important moments," he said today.

"There are challenges given the expectations that are created by the global mirror that is held up to the game in this country's competitive sporting landscape, but enormous growth opportunities are available if the stakeholders are united.

"My aim is to ensure there is a seamless transition, with minimal interruption to the good work of the very many people in the Member Federations, the Leagues, the NPL and community clubs who work so hard to deliver on the game's extensive agenda.

"I extend my sincere thanks to Chris and the current board as well as the past chairmen and board members who gave me the opportunity to lead a wonderful team of talented, passionate and dedicated people at FFA.



"There is plenty of work to be done including the finalisation of our bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023. It would be fantastic on so many levels if Australia could secure such a huge football tournament and world event."

The FFA board today thanked David for his contribution and for signalling his intention early to allow them to find a replacement for what will be a redefined role in 2020.

"David has provided strong and distinguished leadership over a long period and particularly through a difficult last few years for FFA as we have managed the governance and structural changes around the game," said Nikou.

"Working together for the next six months, we will continue to reposition FFA for ongoing success. While he will be with us for some time yet, David will leave us with our respect and sincerest best wishes for continued success in the next stage of his career.

"The timing of David's decision is predicated on the recent progress of the New Leagues Working Group with regards to determining the future governance model for the Australia's Professional Football Leagues and FFA."