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Western United have finalised a deal with Italian maestro Alessandro Diamanti and will unveil him to fans on Thursday morning.

The A-League new boys have previously been linked with the 17 cap Italian but last night posted a tweet showing a picture of a diamond, sparking speculation the deal has been done.

However FTBL understands the star will be unveiled at special ceremony in Melbourne's Western Suburbs on Thursday morning.

The signing comes after Melbourne Victory were blocked from signing Diamanti as a special guest marquee three years ago because the FFA believed he was not famous enough to bring in new fans to the A-League.

The 36 year old attacking playmaker has remained on the radar of A-League since though - and will now be a pivotal

part of Western United's attacking line up, playing just behind former Socceroo Scott McDonald and linking up with Greek midfield marquee Panagiotis Kone.

Diamanti first made a name for himself as a 16 year old with Prato, notching up 18 goals in 59 games in the Italian lower leagues as a teenager.

A series of loan spells eventually saw him move to Serie A with Livorno in 2007 where he repeated his good run of stats, scoring 17 times in another 59 games.

West Ham brought him to the EPL and made an instant impact on his debut where he scored from the spot against Liverpool - despite tripping over as he struck the ball.

A spot kick expert - he scored from the spot five times for West Ham with another three from open play - he was a fan favourite at the Hammers but returned to Serie A with Brescia after just one season.

The move ended in a transfer row over the fee and a season

later, Diamanti moved again to Bologna on a co-ownership deal.

There he enjoyed his most successful period including scoring this outstanding freekick against Cagliari to keep Bologna out the relegation zone.

The biggest transfer fee of his career saw him make a €6.9 million move to Chinese Super League side Guangzhou Evergrande in 2014 which turned into a series of loans to Fiorentina, Watford and Atalanta until he left China as a free agent.

When the move to the A-League was blocked by the FFA in 2016, he flitted between Palermo, Perugia and Livorno until Western United finally sealed a deal to bring him to Australia.

With tattoos to match his talent, the colourful playmaker is now set to bring life to Western United's attack and strike fear into keepers and defenders

Emma Highwood leaves FFA

Emma Highwood, a top Football Federation Australia executive involved in the Alen Stajcic sacking drama, will leave the governing body at the end of next month.

Highwood's exit comes just a fortnight after David Gallop announced he will finish up as chief executive officer at year's end.

FFA vice-chairman Heather Reid stepping away from her board duties as she battles cancer - in the wake of the controversy over her role in Alen Stajcic's dismissal - leaves just one woman, Kelly Barin Rosmarin, on the remaining board of five.

Highwood's resignation follows that of the only other woman on the FFA executive, company secretary Jo Setright, in April.

Women's Council chair Ros Moriarty is the only woman, and an outside chance at best, among the publicly speculated candidates - such as PFA chief John Didulica, Sydney FC boss Danny Townsend and Victorian chief Peter Filopoulos - tipped to step into Gallop's shoes.

Highwood, 38, leaves FFA after delivering the biggest sports registration database in Australia MyFootballClub, overseeing record participation growth in the sport and also the Aldi Miniros program.

She kept a low profile during her tenure, especially during

the ugly scenes around Stajcic's dismissal.

As head of women's football, it was Highwood who implemented the review process that eventually led Gallop and the FFA board to terminate Stajcic's reign and its subsequent shambolic handling.

However Highwood avoided the spotlight over the Stajcic row and insisted she was not responsible for the running of the Matildas, passing the buck to the FFA's head of high performance, Luke Casserly.

Stajcic was eventually paid out by FFA, apologised to by Reid for her comments on his exit, and hired as coach of Central Coast Mariners.

Both FFA and Stajcic have agreed not to comment further on the saga as part of a settlement.

"The anticipated restructure of the leagues presents the ideal time for me to leave FFA and to pursue new challenges and opportunities," said Highwood today.

"I'm both satisfied and proud of what has been accomplished in football development, at the grassroots and in women's football during my time.

"I am proud of the outcomes we have been able to deliver in



an often-complex stakeholder environment and with tight resources.

"There is a real opportunity now for the game to pull together and align under a new governance structure and I wish the FFA board and stakeholders all the best as they move into this new era for football."

FFA CEO David Gallop paid tribute to Highwood's work and added: «Emma has been a champion for both women's and community football in Australia.

"She has always demonstrated both a love for football and a desire to help it grow, develop and reach its potential.

"It's not easy to manage participation in the largest participation sport in the country, but Emma was able to do so with great passion and innovation.»