



YOUNG TSEKENIS EARNING HIS STRIPES AT THE STALLIONS

There is another young gun emerging from the Marconi Stallions in the form of Damian Tsekenis.



Despite commencing the season with the club's U18's side, the striker worked his way up through the ranks to make his first grade debut back in Round 14.

He took his opportunity in the best fashion possible, with a stunning strike off the bench late in the Stallion's 5-2 victory over Sydney FC. **Since then**, 18-year-old has made four cameo appearances in first grade while continuing to build on his tally of five goals in the U20's competition.

The former St George, Sydney Olympic and Bonnyrigg White Eagles man could not have envisioned a better first taste of the top flight.

"It was a very good feeling," Tsekenis reflected. **"Coming off** the bench, I didn't really expect it.

"But the ball fell to me and I had to do the business, I guess."

Tsekenis is a striker who does not lack confidence in the final third, as evident in his acrobatic bicycle-kick assist for Mitch Mallia's winner against Sydney Olympic last weekend.

The youngster revealed that he enjoys having the ball at his feet and continues to model and sharpen his game off the Stallions' skipper Marko Jesic.

"I think my main strength is my control, keeping the ball

close to me and holding players off," Tsekenis said.

"Marko Jesic is a very big player I've looked up to in the first grade team.

"I think I play a bit like him- obviously he's much more experienced, but I look up to him, watch his game, and try and learn off him whenever I can.

"Another aspect of my game that I need to work on is getting stronger on the ball, and

maybe just being a bit quicker but I guess that will happen as I work harder and harder."

Damian is one of a handful of future talent who have been blooded by his

father Peter Tsekenis at Marconi this campaign.

The Marconi manager, and former St. George, Sydney Olympic, Newcastle United and Bankstown City Lions defender, has eased Damian through his formative years as a footballer.

However despite being the son of the boss, who also happens to be a former Australian Olympic representative, Tsekenis is experiencing no added pressure as he attempts to make his own name in the footballing world.

"Having my father here may seem little difficult but honestly I treat him as if he is just another coach," he revealed.

"I don't disrespect him; I respect him as both a coach and a father.

"I don't think I would say that he's pushed me, but I think he has helped me a lot over the past couple of years to be where I am at the moment."

Tsekenis has just landed in Tasmania ahead of Marconi's FFA Cup Round of 32 clash with South Hobart FC on Wednesday night.

He is treasuring every moment of his first interstate away trip with the squad.

"I'm very grateful for this (trip to Hobart)," he said.

"This is the first time I have travelled with the team, so I am very happy to be with the boys.

"Hopefully we can get a win tomorrow (Wednesday) night."

Upon returning to Sydney, it will be straight back to business for Tsekenis and Marconi as they endeavour to seal a spot in the all-important top five.

The youngster believes his teammates are more than capable of building on their recent rich vein of form to finish the job.

"I am very confident," he said.

"Beating Olympic put us in a very good position and I think we are going to finish off this season very strong.

"We'll go into the finals as a unit and try as best as we can to get into the Grand Final and win it.

On a personal level, Tsekenis will look to contribute where he can as the Stallions attempt to add to their trophy cabinet which already possesses this season's TAFE Waratah Cup.

However at his age, the youngster is well aware that he may have to bide his time for a little longer before receiving consistent minutes.

"Honestly, as a player I obviously want to get out there as much as I can," he said.

"But the boys are buzzing, everyone's buzzing, so whether I get out there or not, I am happy either way."

In the long run, Tsekenis holds aspirations of making the step up to the professional game.

However he is remaining grounded, and willing to continue grafting at Marconi until an opportunity may arise.

"Of course I want to make it professionally, but at the moment I just have to work as hard as I can to achieve what I can right now.

"I believe if I work hard, things will pay off in the long run and I will hopefully make it somewhere."

