



By George Stavroulakis

SOCCEEROOS DEBUT CALL-UP IN DOUBT

Injury may cost Callum Elder a Socceroos debut amid reports the young defender has been selected in Australia's squad for next month's World Cup qualifiers.

Hull City manager Grant McCann has revealed the 24-year-old and teammate Jackson Irvine have both been notified they are in Graham Arnold's provisional squad for next month's World Cup qualifiers against Nepal and Taiwan.

Elder, however, missed the Tigers's 3-0 English Championship win at Luton on the weekend due to a calf problem.

McCann said the ex-Leicester City player wouldn't be available for Hull's match against Cardiff this weekend, leaving him with limited opportunities to prove his fitness before Arnold announces his 23-man squad on October 3.

"**He's got** a little grade one tear in his calf," McCann told the Hull Daily Mail. "It's not going to be too long. The worst case scenario it'll be two weeks.

"**Hopefully he** can be back before the international break. That's what we're hoping for."

After Saturday's (Sunday AM AEST) clash with Cardiff, Hull play Massimo Luongo's Sheffield Wednesday next Tuesday (Wednesday AM AEST) in what could be Elder's last chance to prove his fitness.

The Sydney-born Australia under-20 representative spent six years at Leicester but failed to make a single senior appearance for the Premier League club, spending time on loan at six different lower-league outfits before joining compatriot Irvine at Hull in August.

The Socceroos, who began their World Cup 2022 qualifying campaign with a 3-0 win over Kuwait earlier this month, take on Nepal in Canberra on October 10 before travelling to face Taipei in Kaohsiung on October 15.



'I was surprised they let Millis go'

Hibs decided to get rid of Millis in the off-season after not taking up the option of a second year. The Socceroo skipper impressed in Edinburgh in 2018/2019, making 31 appearances.

Maclaren was a teammate of Millis's at Hibs and was shocked by the decision.

"I was very surprised Hibs let a player of Millis's quality go," he told The Edinburgh Evening News.

"Sometime players want to go, but Millis wanted to stay.

"Looking at the Hibs squad, the injuries they've had and the replacements they've got, I think Paul Heckingbottom will be scratching his head thinking, 'Actually, I wish we still had Mark.'

"He was great for him last season - he played every game.

"Millis's experienced enough to deal with it but from somebody who was close to Millis, he loved it at Hibs and was devastated to leave. It's a sad situation."

FIXTURES SET TO CHANGE FOR TV DEAL

This season's A-League fixtures are set to be tweaked if the free to air TV deal with ABC gets over the line, Football Federation Australia has admitted.

TV and football bosses are hoping to finalise a deal which will see every Saturday night's 5.15pm match (Sydney time) shown live on the national broadcaster as well as Fox Sports.

But a quirk of the scheduling already announced by Football Federation Australia means the timeslot is heavily loaded with Wellington Phoenix matches.

In total, a third of the games would feature Phoenix, including six home games for the New Zealand-based side and three more away games.

Eight of those happen on consecutive weekends over December and January.

Now Football Federation Australia has confirmed it will revisit the fixture list to vary things up for the timeslot if the TV deal goes ahead to give Aussie teams a bigger showcase.

A final decision has yet to be made, but it could see 7.30pm games brought forward, while the New Zealand-based Phoenix games may move from 5.15 Sydney-time to an earlier 3pm Sydney time slot.

The FFA is keen to avoid more drastic changes to the fixture list to avoid causing too much disruption for any fans who have already booked travel arrangements.

"**We are** more likely to tweak times rather than match fixtures," said a spokesman. "It's too early to say though exactly how that will be finalised."

Talks with the ABC are still said to be underway, but doubts have been raised about the ABC taking Fox Sports content without breaching its charter on commercial advertising, but also lacking the resources to produce its own coverage.

Meanwhile the FFA has told fans to wait and see what it has prepared for its pre-season marketing campaign.

Although radio ads have been booked for upcoming Matildas and Socceroos, it's understood there have been no bookings so far for the A-League season launch.

The governing body says it is keeping its powder dry until the AFL and NRL Grand Finals are over before launching its



advertising blitz.

Fox Sports have this month been filming night shoots with each club at their

stadiums as part of their promo campaign for the season, and the FFA cited that as an example of the marketing ahead.