



# SOCCEROOS PLAYER RATINGS VS CHINESE TAIPEI

A tougher task, a more technical opponent, a rough away trip in difficult conditions...and a complete blow out of a scoreline. See how the Socceroos rated in their 7-1 thrashing of Chinese Taipei.

The Taiwanese are a tricky outfit. They were nabbed from the South Asian minnow wasteland and the wrong-side of the FIFA 150 rankings by former Fremantle City winger, Gary White.

It's nice to see Australia's football roots - however tenuous - weave and splinter their way through even the most unlikely of Asian soil, but fortunately for the Aussies this development springboard didn't come back to bite us.

Bar a wake-up call in the form of a precision Taipei header on the 20th minute mark, the Aussies had to deal with a little bark but barely any bite. So considering this match was effectively a Socceroos showcase, who put their best foot forward?

## SOCCEROOS RATINGS

### Mat Ryan - 7

The one real chance the Taiwanese manufactured, they dispatched ruthlessly. Ryan was surprised, Rhyan Grant was dumfounded, but Chen Yi-Wei looked cool as ice, as if he tucks away deadly headers every weekend and not once every 57 caps.

Not much else to judge Ryan by really, other than the anger in his reaction and the fact the next time the ball came past Wei, Grant took more notice.

### Rhyan Grant - 7

It's unfair to judge Grant by one moment of sloppiness considering he'd been excellent up until that point. His choice moment resulted in Australia's first goal, where Grant swung in a delicious cross for Adam Taggart to lap up, right in their keeper's face.

He was at fault for the Taiwan goal but a livewire for the rest of the first half until fading somewhat in the second half when Hrustic came on and stole the spotlight on the road.

### Milos Degenek - 7

He's loving life back in Belgrade and it's to forget he's only 25 because he looks like a natural leader and, well, a little weathered.

We will temper this rating a little by pointing out that Degenek, like almost every Socceroo on the pitch, was bamboozled at least once by a trio of Taipei's Messi-wannabees. At times, it looked as if there were a few Taiwanese more interested in their YouTube highlight reels than finding teammates, but given the scoreline, you can hardly blame them.

Despite conceding, there was a noticeable shift in how comfortable the Socceroos looked maintaining possession in their defensive third with Degenek in the squad over Bailey Wright, which is interesting considering Wright had a decent shift against Nepal.

Most encouraging though, is simply that Degenek looks spritely. He calmly intercepted tidy balls from the Taiwanese midfield all night, the sort that would have caused the Aussies problems if Degenek's head was somewhere in the Balkans, forlornly nostalgic about Splavs, Raki and Champions League football.

### Harry Souttar - 7

We're not sure if it's a good or a bad thing that after a single cap we all sat back and thought 'Yep, we know what he does.' The big lad did exactly what we expected. Headers? Check. Holding off attackers with his left hand? Double check. Running? Mmm...

Say what we like about him, he's got three or four goals in two appearances. At this rate he'll outdo Mark Viduka. He didn't run much either.

### Brad Smith - 7

Because Arnie clearly reads these ratings (how else would he pick his squad?) he would have noticed our rant after the Nepal match about how Behich's crossing is glitched and stuck in some weird time-loop.

It might seem ridiculous to pin a transformation on a Seattle Sounders' fullback but Smith's inclusion re-energised the Socceroos in that opening stanza. He cut inside brilliantly and brought a sense of unpredictability that's been sorely lacking from the Socceroos in wide positions.

He was loaned out from Boumemouth because of a few nervy, erratic first touches that left a yawning chasm between him and the rest of the silky smooth mid-table brigade and he faded from the Socceroos radar while Behich went on his 21-match run.

But any Liverpool fan can tell you that when he's confident, he's damn exciting. And when he's partnered with Awer Mabil, the question then becomes: how much excitement can Arnie take?

### James Jeggo - 7

Jeggo's a bit of a tough one to rate. On the one hand it's great to see him back in the starting lineup because he's a no-nonsense, cut-and-dry central midfielder. On the other, it's a tiny bit disappointing to see him back in the starting lineup because he's a no-nonsense, cut-and-dry central midfielder.

Partnering him alongside Aaron Mooy and Jackson Irvine

makes the task even harder, because Mooy pulls the depth strings and controls the tempo, while Irvine does all the running and takes responsibility for the late arrivals.

### Jackson Irvine - 9

The funny thing about depth is you don't notice you're developing it until it scores two goals and stares you in the face.

When we bring back Daniel Arzani, Tom Rogic and Massimo Luongo, where does Irvine fit in alongside Mark Milligan and Aaron Mooy?

The more we play him, the more we realise he's not just another Harry Souttar, do-a-job kind of inclusion. He plays the box-to-box role increasingly well and his late Aaron Ramsey-esque runs are becoming the best in the team.

In a first choice squad he's not a starter yet, but he will be if he polishes up his long ground passes and most of all, his finishing. He spurned a couple against Nepal, a couple tonight, and that first goal he scored looked as likely to go in off his shoulder as his boot.

### Aaron Mooy - 8

He just oozes class.

### Brandon Borrello - 5

The most disappointing of the night because we've begun to form these high expectations around Borrello, which we fear may be based a little more in hope than in hard evidence. He's clearly got the talent. He had it at Brisbane Roar when he was a pup and Bundesliga clubs don't tend to play slouches. But he's still fairly young and he's had a horror injury run, so he's still a work in progress.

Errant first touches are to be expected, but his real problem in this match was his work off the ball, where his defensive skills were a little shaky.

### Adam Taggart - 8

Arnie's formation tries to take the pressure off our strikers to do anything other than score goals. It's all about their runs, whether they're responding to quick through balls from central midfield on a transitional break, or pouncing on crosses from switches out wide.

So it's easy to watch Taggart or especially Maclaren and figure that they weren't that involved. But Taggart had actually had a very strong game. He was outmuscled a little, which against Taiwan is a bit meh, but his runs were solid and his positioning was first class.

He would have easily had a hat-trick had our through balls been more accurate in the first half.

### Awer Mabil - 7

Stepped it up a notch after a mixed cameo against Nepal and put both feet firmly in that starting wing position. He's not only our most exciting attacker in one-on-ones, he's also the most adept at flick-ons and he made Brad Smith look good. Damn good.

He also intercepted a bucketload of defensive passes, tribute to his quick feet and impressive agility.

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### Mustafa Amini - 6

He'll be hard-pressed to work his way into that midfield long-term. It's not that he has any particular weakness, he just doesn't have any standout strengths, either. His shooting is a perfect example.

It's likely that we're not seeing him in his desired role. At the Central Coast Mariners, he used to have this electric ability to manoeuvre through tight-spaces. But in the current Socceroos formation it's so rare that he's operating in those positions.

### Ajdin Hrustic - 8

While it's so easy to get carried away with quick-passing and driving runs against the world number 127, he's another of Arnie's new inclusions that has the potential to shift Australia into a fast-paced, dynamic forward line. Two assists and an electric presence made sure he made an impact in his short stint off the bench.

### Jamie Maclaren - 8

Who would have thought Maclaren and Taggart fighting it out for the starting striking role against some of the world's lowest football nations would be a spectator sport in itself. Maclaren leading 3-2 so far after a very clinical effort to round out the scoring.