



POSTECOGLOU HAS OUTGROWN AUSTRALIA

ANGE POSTECOGLOU IS CLOSING IN ON WHAT WOULD BE A HISTORIC J.LEAGUE TITLE AS YOKOHAMA F.MARINOS COACH.

With Ange Postecoglou on the verge of making history in Japan, Australian soccer is wondering again what might have been.

Nearly two years after his shock resignation as Socceroos coach, Postecoglou has a big chance to add another stellar achievement to his footballing journey: a J-League title.

Early in his tenure at Yokohama F. Marinos, his side toyed with relegation, but ultimately finished 12th in the 18-team competition, along with making the Emperor's Cup final.

Now at the tail end of his second season, Postecoglou has his team one point off top spot in the competition with five games to play.

But beyond results, he has his side playing the attacking, enthralling brand of football that captivated Australia during his stint at Brisbane Roar, then with the Socceroos.

Ex-Melbourne Victory coach Kevin Muscat, who worked under Postecoglou, is unsurprised by his former mentor's success but laments the loss to Australian football.

Postecoglou quit the Socceroos after ensuring qualification for the 2018 World Cup, having come under increased pressure and scrutiny in the latter stages of the campaign.

"I couldn't be any happier for him," Muscat told AAP.

"Without getting caught up in the results ... the way he's going about it and the football they're playing fills me with a lot of joy because I've got similar love about the game that he does so I enjoy watching his teams play.

"On the flip side, I can't help but feel sad and disappointed that we didn't really give his vision enough respect and many, many people questioned; and eventually got what they wanted in him moving on.

"So I feel sad for the country that we didn't get to bear the fruit of his vision."

Neither does Postecoglou's success overseas come as a surprise to one of his most-respected former players, Matt McKay.

"He pretty much makes (players) buy in. And if they don't then they won't be there," McKay told AAP.

"So maybe there was a bit of turnover but he

believes in the guys he has."

McKay was captain under Postecoglou during the 2010-11 season when the Roar went 28 games unbeaten - including winning the A-League Premiers Plate and the grand final. He was also part of the coach's 2015 Asian Cup-winning Socceroos side.

He compared the transformation at F. Marinos to Postecoglou's first season at the Roar, where he spent the closing months of 2009-10 refining a game plan that would hold them in good stead for their dominant season - a period that saw the team dubbed "Roarcelona".

"He was trying to mould his team for the next year and that was the year we won it," McKay said.

"We had a long pre-season but he was very distinct in how he wanted to play, so everyone knew their responsibility in a team.

"He had that well drilled into his players. I think that was pretty crucial that you knew what you had to do in certain situations and he planned sessions and talks around that.

"As a player you don't really learn that then, you see that in years after that - you can see how he actually planned sessions and made you do things that will ultimately help the team move forward."

McKay said he believed Postecoglou had grown as a coach over the years, from a more "standoff-ish" approach in his early days, to a "very good man manager" who was tactically and technically astute but continued to develop and learn along the way.

While Postecoglou enjoyed a superb club run in Australia, along with a fine stint as national team coach, McKay expected his former mentor to continue looking forward, rather than back.

"I think he's kind of outgrown Australia to be honest and I don't think Japan's the last step for him," McKay said.

"He's conquered Asia at international level with our Asian Cup and hopefully he wins the J-League title and then he gets over to Europe.

"I'm sure he's got ambitions to go over there and he's good enough to do it."

FFA CUP FINAL

ADELAIDE UNITED ROUT MELBOURNE CITY 4-0

The teenager scored the first goal and helped set-up the second in Wednesday night's cup final at Adelaide's Coopers Stadium. The Guinea-born striker also won the Mark Viduka award for his efforts as the player of the match. Toure's teammates Ben Halloran, Nikola Mileusnic and Riley McGree also scored as Adelaide captured consecutive cups - and a third title in just the sixth edition of the tournament. Toure, a Guinea-born forward who migrated to Australia as a five-year-old with his parents, was the game-breaker.

The 19-year-old produced two moments of magic before receiving a standing ovation from the 14,920-strong crowd when substituted 20 minutes from fulltime.

Toure, who only made his senior debut for Adelaide in August, netted his fifth goal of the cup campaign - he also scored on A-League debut 12 days ago, but saved his most important interventions for the final. Toure pounced on an insightful lifted through ball from teammate Ryan Strain in the 25th minute to



put the Reds ahead.

Strain, a metre inside his own half, played the strongly-built forward into space and Toure instinctively blasted a right-footed shot which surprised City goalkeeper Dean Bouzanis. Toure was on such a wide, tight angle that Bouzanis was anticipating a cross - instead, the youngster launched and beat the keeper at his near post.

The goal turned the tide of the final, which until then had been flowing City's way. The visitors quickly settled and, just seven minutes in, red-hot striker Jamie Maclaren missed the mark with a close-range header. Maclaren and his lively teammate Lachlan Wales had further shots before Toure triggered Adelaide's scoring landslide. Toure was instrumental in Halloran's 49th minute goal. After winning a show of strength with imposing City defender Harrison Delbridge just inside halfway, he produced a visionary pass which played McGree into space. McGree charged towards goal and, with a deft cut-back, found Halloran who had no trouble beating Bouzanis from seven metres. McGree and Halloran also featured in Adelaide's third goal in the 60th minute, with the former passing out wide to the latter, who aimed a low cross into the danger zone which slid past a pack including Bouzanis and Mileusnic tapped-in at the back post. Just 15 minutes later, McGree swivelled and scored with a left-footer from 10 metres out to tip Adelaide's celebrations into overdrive.