



By George Stavroulakis

ANTE MILICIC .. "I HAVE SEEN WHAT THEY HAVE

Australian women's soccer risks slipping behind other nations without much-needed improvement in the W-League, Matildas coach Ante Milicic says.

European countries, in particular, are funnelling big money into women's leagues and Milicic says it's imperative Australia's domestic competition keeps pace.

"I have been in Europe for the last couple of years and ... I have seen what they have invested," Milicic told reporters in Adelaide on Monday.

"And now, that is the challenge for us.

"With the (Australian pay) agreement that has been put in place, we know now that it's a serious sport.

"But now it's for us to build on that W-League. We need more games, we need more coaches available, we need better facilities.

"So we need to expand on that if we want to continue because, to be perfectly honest, particularly Europe is really, really moving forward at a quick rate.

"And if we don't address these (issues), I think it's going to be difficult in the years to come."

The Matildas downed Chile on Saturday in Parramatta before 20,029 spectators - a record for a women's international in Australia. The second and final game in the series will be held in Adelaide on Tuesday night. England at the weekend set its own crowd record for a women's home international when 77,768 people attended a friendly against Germany.



Australia's W-League kicks off this Thursday with the nine teams playing 14 rounds before finals.

Milicic said it was vital the domestic league improved - a lesson borne out at the World Cup in June and July this year, when the Matildas exited at the round of 16 stage.

"When you look at the World Cup ... the girls that aren't in a professional environment or aren't playing where they are getting games at a high level of intensity, it jumps too

big," he said.

"So we have to find ways together if we're going to narrow the gap.

"That is the challenge for us and that is where we have to get to.

"And if we qualify for the (2020 Tokyo) Olympics, that is what is waiting for us in an August month. So we need to really have a focus on that."



MATILDAS COACH DEMANDS IMPROVEMENT

Matildas coach Ante Milicic is demanding improvement while forecasting another rugged challenge against Chile in tonight's friendly in Adelaide.

Australia banked a 2-1 win against Chile in the first of the two friendlies on Saturday in Sydney.

"We were quite pleased with the performance in Sydney, considering the circumstances, so now we need to build on that," Milicic said.

"We respect the opposition, we know it's a country with a proud footballing history and they will give us a difficult game.

"But at the same time, we always believe in ourselves, we focus on ourselves and we're confident that we will be able to put in a good performance."

Milicic wanted improvement over the full 90 minutes in Adelaide after the Matildas controlled play in Sydney but conceded a late goal from a set piece.

"I thought we were in total control, to be honest, and maybe if we took a few chances early, we could have killed it off," he said.

"In the end, to concede again from a set piece is disappointing. Then at times, it looks like you're holding on in the last five to 10 minutes - it never should have got to that.

"We need to be better at that."

Milicic was pondering changes to his starting side from the Sydney fixture, which attracted 20,029 spectators - a record crowd for a women's international in Australia.

"Saturday's game took a lot out of a few of them and that was a concern, to be honest, leading into the game," he said.

"That Lydia Williams' first game on Saturday since the World Cup, that was Jenna McCormick's debut ... Emily van Egmond has just come back from her ankle injury, so we had a lot of girls who hadn't played football for two, three months.

"How they they back up ... we will go through it with the medical staff; we will see how the girls feel. (But) I know whatever line-up we put out will be competitive."

OFF-FIELD DRAMA FOUR NOT PICKED BY OLYROOS

While Adelaide young gun Al Hassan Toure has, as expected, been named, his A-League teammate and Olyroos captain Riley McGree is a notable absentee.

McGree, Lachlan Wales, Nathaniel Atkinson and Brandon Wilson have all been asked to "show cause" to the FFA for their alleged behaviour following a qualifying tournament for next year's Olympics in Phnom Penh at the end of March.

Wales, Atkinson and Wilson are also absent from the 25-player squad named on Monday to face North Korea, China and Lithuania's under-23 teams in the three friendlies from November 15.

Toure's selection was confirmed last week by national team coach Graham Arnold and indicates Australia is winning the race for the teenager's services.

The 19-year-old, who has shot to prominence in the FFA Cup and A-League this season, could also play for Liberia, the country where his parents were born.

Arnold has resisted the urge to fast track Toure into the Socceroos squad in a bid to tie him down to Australia long-term but said he's happy and excited to have the striker as part of his plans ahead of January's Olympic qualifiers in Thailand.

Australia last competed in an Olympic football tournament in Beijing in 2008.

OLYROOS SQUAD: Panos Armenakas, Keanu Baccus, Daniel Bouman, Jake Brimmer, Gabriel Cleur, Thomas Deng, Zach Duncan, Ben Folami, Alex Gersbach, Thomas Glover, Kosta Grozos, Jordan Holmes, Jacob Italiano, Anthony Kalik, Josh Laws, Daniel Margush, Connor Metcalfe, Tas Mourdoukoutas, Ramy Najjarine, Connor O'Toole, Nick Pennington, Reno Piscopo, Dylan Ryan, Al Hassan Toure, Harry Van Der Sag.

