



By George Stavroulakis

# ANGE POSTECOGLOU..

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Former Socceroos boss Ange Postecoglou is just 90 minutes away from becoming the first Australian coach to win the J-League, Japanese football's top division.



**Only an** unlikely loss of four goals or more in the final round will deny Ange Postecoglou from an historic J-League title victory with Yokohama F. Marinos.

**Ange Postecoglou** is just 90 minutes from what's being hailed as the greatest achievement by an Australian soccer coach with his Yokohama F. Marinos poised to clinch the J-League title on Saturday.

**Yokohama host** second-placed FC Tokyo in a blockbuster final-round clash and only an unlikely home defeat of four goals or more will prevent the 54-year-old from becoming the first Australian coach to win a major domestic club trophy overseas.

**It comes** two years after he walked away from coaching the Socceroos after qualifying for the 2018 World Cup and in just his second season with the Japanese club.

**Yokohama thrashed** fourth-placed hosts Kawasaki Frontale 4-1 on Saturday in the penultimate round to sit three points

clear at the top of the table after FC Tokyo could only draw 1-1 a home with 13th-placed Urawa Red Diamonds.

«**For us**, nothing really changes. Irrespective of the FC Tokyo result we wanted to play well today,» Postecoglou said.

«**We wanted** to play our football, and I think we did that.»

**Speaking of** the blockbuster match next weekend, Postecoglou said, «I think the team that are the champions are the ones that deserve to be champions. We still have to do that.»

**Former Socceroos** goalkeeper Mark Bosnich said Postecoglou's feat - if successful on Saturday - would be «easily the No.1 achievement by an Australian coach.»

**He said** the difficulty of overcoming the language barrier to turn a struggling club around and win the J-League should not be underestimated.

«**Hopefully it** will open a pathway for more Australian coaches.» Bosnich told Fox Sports.

**Yokohama have** a +7 goal differential over FC Tokyo, meaning

they only need to avoid a four-goal defeat (or worse) to claim the crown in front of their home fans.

**The top-flight** title would be Yokohama's fourth and first since 2004, when they successfully defended the crown they won a year earlier.

**A two-time** A-League winning coach with Brisbane Roar, Postecoglou has turned Yokohama around during his tenure - which began just a month after his shock resignation as Socceroos coach in November 2017.

**After a** dire start to the 2018 league season left Yokohama in a relegation battle, they improved late in the season to finish 12th and also made the final of the J-League Cup.

**Yokohama's form** in 2019 resulted in Postecoglou being rewarded with a contract extension which will keep him in charge until the end of next season.

**Saturday's thumping** win over Kawasaki was a sixth-straight victory for Yokohama, who are now undefeated in 10 games.



## Sydney FC have move into top spot in the A-League and condemned Western United to their third loss on the trot with a 2-0 win in Geelong.

**Sydney FC** have marched to the top of the A-League table with a resounding 2-0 win over Western United at GMHBA Stadium.

**Adam Le Fondre** struck twice in the first half to condemn Mark Rudan's side to their third consecutive loss and send the Sky Blues two points clear of Melbourne City.

«**It wasn't** our best performance with the ball but I think it was our best performance defensively,» Sydney coach Steve Corica said.

«**I think** a clean sheet is very important. We had a big trip last week to Perth and obviously another trip down here this week so I think the boys were probably a little bit flat - they looked a little bit flat.

«**But full** credit to them, they worked extremely hard defensively, kept a clean sheet.»

**Sydney's day** was made difficult before it had even begun, with Milos Ninkovic ruled out before kick-off through illness and replaced by Anthony Caceres, while United benched striker Besart Berisha in favour of Scott McDonald.

**Western United** started well, but Rudan was left to lament a drop-off in intensity after a pause in play 17 minutes into the game, when Sydney defender Ryan McGowan was down with a bleeding nose after a head clash.

«**From a** set piece they were able to get their first and they

got their second again from a lapse in concentration,» Rudan said post-match.

«**I wasn't** happy with the lack of intensity particularly after McGowan went down because I think that's when things turned around - they just lifted and we seemed to be second to everything as well.»

**As the** first half went on, the Sky Blues seized control and opened the scoring in the 27th minute through Le Fondre. **Midfielder Alexander** Baumjohann looped a potent corner kick to the back post where the Englishman comfortably saw off Connor Chapman and headed home.

**United's best** chance of the half came when Dario Jertec tried his luck from distance in the second minute of added time but saw his shot go skidding past the post.

**Two minutes** later, Brandon O'Neill played through Baumjohann down the right hand side, with the German cutting the ball back for Le Fondre, who buried his second goal to strike a hammer blow to the hosts on the stroke of half-time.

**United largely** looked toothless and were unable to score for the third consecutive week, with Greek international Panagiotis Kone forcing a rare save from Andrew Redmayne in the 84th minute, while Dylan Pierias had a shot blocked three minutes later.

# RUDAN: WE SEEMED TO BE SECOND TO EVERYTHING