



By George Stavroulakis

# DOMO ARIGATO, MR POSTECOGLOU: YOKOHAMA F. MARINOS CLINCH J.LEAGUE TITLE

**Ange Postecoglou has secured his crowning achievement in club football, with Yokohama F. Marinos enjoying a dream coronation as they clinched the J.League title with a stunning 3-0 win over FC Tokyo on Saturday.**

In front of a J.League record crowd of 63,854 at Nissan Stadium, F. Marinos claimed their first championship in 15 years and did it in a way that was totally reflective of the man who steered them there – by sticking to their guns.

It had all the hallmarks of a grand final-like occasion, with the last round of the season pitting Japanese football's two best teams this year against each other.

But the odds were totally stacked in Yokohama's favour – a win, draw or even a three-goal defeat would have been enough for them to finish top and deny second-placed FC Tokyo. All they had to do was avoid a loss by four or more goals.

Any other coach in Postecoglou's shoes might have tweaked their tactics ever so slightly and emphasised the importance of defensive structure over attacking freedom, knowing their opponents would have no choice but to throw everything at them to have any hope.

But Postecoglou is like no other coach. He has an unshakeable belief in his methods and his record at South Melbourne, Brisbane Roar and the Socceroos shows that those who put their faith in him are always rewarded.

F. Marinos is no exception, with this victory the exciting crescendo of the journey he has taken the club on for the past two years.

«We're champions,» Postecoglou declared.

«I'm very proud of the players, very proud of the staff. We've got fantastic supporters and I'm very happy for everyone.

«We were the best team, we won. That's why we're champions. We've been playing fantastic football. The players deserve this - all year they've been working hard. It's a special day and I want to celebrate.»

Yokohama weathered an early storm from the visitors before taking what felt like an inevitable stranglehold on the contest and Theerathon Bunmathan's opening goal sucked all the tension out of the air and replaced it with something like relief.

Bunmathan took a shot from outside the box in the 26th minute and it took an enormous deflection off Keigo Higashi, who was trying to block it, but instead sent the ball flying high, up and over the head of their goalkeeper and into the back of the net.

Two minutes from half-time, they went 2-0 up through Brazilian striker Erik, and they were home and hosed.

There was a twist in the tale – Yokohama played out the last quarter of the match with 10 men after their goalkeeper, Park Iru-gyu, was sent off for a foul on Kensuke Nagai.

And yet, in true Postecoglou style, they still refused to park the bus, scoring their third goal through substitute Keita Endo in the 77th minute.

This is the ninth senior trophy in Postecoglou's cabinet, sitting alongside two grand final wins and a premiership in both the National Soccer League and the A-League, the 1999 Oceania Club Championship with South Melbourne and the 2015 Asian Cup with the Socceroos.



**ANGE POSTECOGLOU RAISES THE J.LEAGUE TROPHY IN TRIUMPH IN YOKOHAMA**



## The man who made sure Ange Postecoglou wasn't lost in translation

**No other Australian coach has won an overseas league of this prominence and only Western Sydney's improbable 2014 AFC Champions League triumph under Tony Popovic could be seen as an achievement of a similar calibre.**



**So where does Postecoglou sit in Australia's pantheon of great coaches across all sports and disciplines? The full scope of his accomplishments – which now span three decades, two countries and the dual spheres of club-based and international competition – suggest he should be somewhere near the pointy end.**