



had its problems on and off the pitch, under performing and dropping to its lowest FIFA ranking. When JVS explained the objectives of our job, it thrilled us both. It wasn't just about results, even though in football it always is, but, it was about changing the way the game is played; implementing an attacking style of play based on having possession of the ball. The complete opposite of what the Greek national team is accustomed to. What a great challenge we thought. Because we love and believe in this style of play. This was more than just taking over a national team. It was about influencing and making change to the whole football landscape. I personally looked at this opportunity with much respect and honour knowing full well that there was more in this project to achieve than just winning.

**OK: You've worked closely with current Greek National Football team first grade coach John Van Schipp, how has he taken to the Greek way of life?**

MV: I have worked together with JVS at Melbourne City and in Holland with PEC Zwolle. We love our football and from the time we started working

together in Melbourne, we clicked. Our like mindedness in the way we want to see the game played has brought us closer together. He is certainly enjoying Greece. But in these early stages, we hit the ground running. Playing catch up to get on top of everything. Now with some more spare time than usual, I'm sure he will enjoy the lifestyle, the food, even some of the many beautiful places there are to visit. He loves it here.

**OK: Being a proud Australian-Greek yourself, how do you feel knowing you have reached a point where you are hearing the national anthem of Greece?**

MV: I guess I am very lucky to be born in Australia and have Greek bloodline. You grow up in Australia and throughout your whole childhood at school, in the playground or at football, you are identified as being a Greek. You grow up in a Greek household, rooted to the culture following all traditions, going to Greek school, Greek functions, learning to speak the language, learning everything about a country we are from regardless of being born in Australia. We are basically embedded with a pride of

being Greek never forgetting where your parents and ancestors are from.

I played for South Melbourne Hellas and wore the large Hellas badge on my chest. When I played, I wore it with so much pride knowing full well it represented the Greek community that had migrated from Greece for a better life in Australia. I was proud to be Greek.

Though, as a professional footballer, I had the honour to represent Australia, the Socceroos and I will never forget that day and the goose bumps I got hearing the national anthem before the game. What an honour.

Now, again I wear the Hellas badge on my chest and yes, it's an amazing feeling. I have Greek blood and I love hearing the national anthem. I am lucky to have been born in a great country like Australia. Its Australia that's given me the opportunities I now have and become who I am now. But there's a connection with Greece that lays deeply entrenched inside of me. I am a Greek Australian. I am honoured, humbled and excited to have been bestowed this responsibility



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*Happy new year*