

GÜLÜM EXITS WESTERN UNITED AHEAD OF YOUNG DEFENDER'S EXPECTED ARRIVAL



ANOTHER VETERAN HAS DEPARTED WESTERN UNITED, WITH THE A-LEAGUE NEWCOMERS ANNOUNCING ON WEDNESDAY THAT ERSAN GÜLÜM WOULD BE LEAVING THE CLUB.

Gülüm made nine appearances for United during his brief spell in Victoria's west, starting all of them in the heart of Head Coach Mark Rudan's three-man defence.

The 32-year-old has not featured in United's match-day squad since the club's 1-1 draw with Western Sydney Wanderers in round 11.

"The boys have been first class," the defender said in the announcement of his departure. "I want to thank all of them, and I'd like to especially thank Mark Rudan for giving me this chance.

"Thank you to all the coaching and off-field staff at Western United. They've been amazing. I'm sad to go but I know the club will continue to grow and I'll always remain a supporter of the Green and Black."

A former member of Besiktas JK, Adanaspor and Adelaide United, the seven-time Turkish international had been in semi-retirement with Whittlesea United in the Victorian state leagues prior to linking up with Western United ahead of the 2019/20 season.

"Ersan is a leader and has helped drive the group forward in our first season," Rudan said. "He brought into the culture of our club and has been a great example to all the boys.

"He's a class act on and off the pitch. Ersan's professionalism and upbeat character was a positive throughout his time with our club. He leaves with our best wishes and Ersan will always be welcome back at our club."

Gülüm is the second veteran departure from United in recent weeks, following on from the release of former-

Socceroo Scott McDonald.

McDonald, 36, went on to sign for Brisbane Roar and featured in their 1-0 win over Wellington Phoenix in round 15.

Gülüm release comes off the heels of Belgian side SV Zulte Waregem posting on their social media channels that 22-year-old Australian centre-back George Timotheou, who made a sole appearance for Schalke 04 in the Bundesliga in 2018/19, would be arriving in Tarneit on loan.

At the time of writing, United have yet to officially confirm the arrival of Timotheou.

The A-League expansion side has also signed former Gold Coast Knights defender Oskar Dillon – who debuted against Central Coast in round 15 – during the January window.

OLYROOS PLAYER RATINGS VS SOUTH KOREA

CHECK HOW EACH OLYROO FARED IN A DISAPPOINTING 2-0 LOSS TO A FAR STRONGER SOUTH KOREA OUTFIT IN THE AFC U23 CHAMPIONSHIPS IN BANGKOK.

Thomas Glover - 6

Poor Glover had a rough night between the sticks.

Bar a couple of decent reaction stops, he was tested and outclassed by very tidy South Korean strikers, beaten first by a ball ricocheting around his goal before the belter second strike smashed past him at his near post.

Gabriel Cleur - 6.5

Cleur deserves credit for fitting into that fullback spot easily over this tournament given his relative lack of experience with many of these lads and he was heavily involved tonight.

Alex Gersbach - 7

Ultimately, Gersbach failed to live up to the captain's armband, unable to stabilise the ship nor command any meaningful attacks from the fullback spot despite some lovely runs in behind.

His biggest problem was his inability to handle his opposing winger, Um-Won-sang, who looked as if he could break past him at virtually any moment. This left Australia a little unhinged and incapable of applying pressure.

Dylan Ryan - 8

So far, Ryan has been one of the standouts of this tournament and tonight was no different. He even provided the single-most exciting moment of individual brilliance by an Aussie with a first-time volley from well outside the area, careering just wide in the first half.

Tass Mourdoukoutas - 6

Failed to impress tonight with loose touches summing up the majority of his involvements.

He simply wasn't quick enough to react to the Koreans, who were

constantly earning unpressed shots from outside the area on his side.

Aiden O'Neill - 6

Disappointingly quiet, lacking in the sort of instructive quality that he's shown so far throughout his career (and you'd expect from a player of his experience).

He - and the rest of Australia's midfield - were thoroughly outclassed by the Koreans.

Connor Metcalfe - 6

It's hard to lay too much blame at the feet of Metcalfe, despite his early withdrawal, because if anything, his lack of success merely highlighted just how technically brilliant these South Koreans were.

He's clearly a fine player, as he showed on multiple occasions with nicely timed drag-backs and clean controls, but he was simply a step behind the entire match. Match fitness? Perhaps.

But the football IQ and subsequent reaction times between both teams were a chasm across every position on the pitch. Metcalfe was simply the canary in the coal mine.

Trent Buhagiar - 5.5

His pace should have been Australia's biggest weapon tonight, as a backs-to-the-wall type of game perfectly suits the electric winger.

Largely, the responsibility for Buhagiar's ineffectiveness falls to his teammates - namely Al Hassan Toure - who were unable to find him in dangerous areas.

Keanu Baccus - 8

Alongside Ryan, Australia's best tonight. He excelled in a far

tougher position, jam-packed between out-ran Aussies in a crucible of phenomenal Korean technicality.

His last-ditch interceptions and brilliant tackles were a saving grace for Australia on multiple occasions and in a few brief spells, he almost unlocked dangerous counter-attacks. Our player of the match.

Jacob Italiano - 5

Quiet and ineffective, offloading responsibility too easily with the occasional hit-and-hope or hospital ball.

He has a habit of dallying on the ball before playing into strikers surrounded by opposition, which threw away the few occasions Australia could truly boast attacking momentum.

Al Hassan Toure - 5

Nearly invisible, with poor service barely half the issue. He's explosive, but his passing needs improvement, as does his confidence in tight areas.

SUBS

Denis Genreau - 5

Genreau was the only substitute who looked to have a hope of effecting the game, but was worse than the player he replaced, Metcalfe.

From the stroke of half-time, South Korea controlled that midfield like a chihuahua on a choker chain.

Reno Piscopo - 6

Piscopo was the most involved of the substitutes, earning himself a caution for trying to throw himself into the game. Not much else to show for it, though.

Ben Folami - N/A