



By George Stavroulakis

MELBOURNE CITY CAPTAIN SCOTT JAMIESON TO RETURN FROM SUSPENSION FOR A-LEAGUE DERBY

SKIPPER SCOTT JAMIESON WILL PROVIDE MELBOURNE CITY WITH A TIMELY BOOST WHEN HE RETURNS FOR THIS WEEK'S DERBY. BUT WILL IT BE ENOUGH FOR AN INJURY-HIT CITY AGAINST A REJUVENATED VICTORY?



Scott Jamieson's return from suspension will boost Melbourne City's defensive stocks.

The return of fiery Melbourne City skipper Scott Jamieson is expected to add an extra level of spice to Friday night's Melbourne derby clash.

The chirpy Jamieson is returning from suspension, following the culmination of five yellow cards.

In a blow for Victory, their captain Leigh Broxham will miss the clash because of a leg strain.

While the return of fullback Jamieson will inject spark and life into the third and last derby of the season, Fox Sports pundit Mark Bosnich doubts it'll be a "dirty derby" at AAMI Park.

Victory has conceded the most fouls this season (219), while Harrison Delbridge's third red card of the season, last week, catapulted City up to No. 1 in the red card standings, just ahead of Victory (one each for departed Kristijan Dobras and Broxham).

Both teams consider themselves stiff for at least one of the expulsions each, which has included controversial VAR intervention.

Only Western Sydney has copped more yellow cards this season, with Victory and City tied in second (led by Ola Toivonen, James Donachie and Scott Jamieson, five apiece).

City has conceded the third most fouls this season (212).

MORE FOOTBALL NEWS

"There always are sparks in a derby and both teams need to pick themselves up. But neither team is dirty," Bosnich said.

"Last week highlighted that with Delbridge's red card. In that moment he rushed in, sometimes that happens. There was no malice, he was so desperate to clean up his mistake. "Erick Mombaerts summed it up – there

was no need for him to get emotional in that situation.

"City plays the most attractive football in the A-League, along with Sydney FC. But they're willing to stop the opposition.

Leigh Broxham will miss Friday's Melbourne derby with a leg injury.

Leigh Broxham will miss Friday's Melbourne derby with a leg injury. Source: Getty Images

"Victory has a different style. Under (ex coach) Marco Kurz, cards come more from fatigue, sitting back and counterattacking.

"There's a new zest under Salvachua and it was a great performance last week against Perth."

In further team news, Soccerroo Josh Brillante or veteran Rostyn Griffiths will answer a defensive SOS amid an City injury crisis at City.

New Scottish signing Jack Hendry will miss at least eight weeks after knee surgery on Tuesday to repair a torn medial collateral ligament.

Hendry has impressed in his two games since signing as an injury replacement for Austrian Richard Windbichler.

With Harrison Delbridge suspended after last week's red card, it leaves Soccerroo-capped Curtis Good as the only recognised senior central defender.

City coach Erick Mombaerts, who has adopted a back three in recent weeks, will likely revert to a four-man defence.

Griffiths and Brillante have each played at stopper this season, and while the former appears a better match up for Victory star Ola Toivonen, Brillante's mobility could be a better fit to counter the pace of the other attackers Andrew Nabbout, Robbie Kruse, Elvis Kamsoba and Rojas.

IKONOMIDIS ACL NOT RELATED TO PAST INJURY



PERTH GLORY COACH TONY POPOVIC INSISTS THE ACL TEAR SUFFERED BY CHRIS IKONOMIDIS LAST SATURDAY WASN'T RELATED TO THE KNEE INJURY HE SUSTAINED THREE WEEKS EARLIER.

Ikonomidis will miss up to 12 months of action after scans confirmed he has torn the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

The 24-year-old suffered the injury just 15 minutes after entering the field in Saturday's 2-2 draw against Melbourne Victory, with his left knee buckling after passing the ball.

It was his first game back since injuring the same knee on January 11 when he copped a dangerous tackle from Adelaide's Michael Jakobsen.

Ikonomidis' left knee was already strapped when he was brought on in the second half against Victory last weekend, but Popovic said the two knee injuries weren't related.

"No, they were two different injuries," Popovic said.

"If you look at half the players out there (at training today), they've probably got strapping."

Ikonomidis starred for Glory last season and established himself within the Soccerroos' set-up.

Popovic said the club would do everything it can to support Ikonomidis.

"It's devastating news for Chris," he said.

"I've spoken to him and it was very raw the first 24-odd hours. There's a lot of anger involved.

"But already today and yesterday there's a difference in his tone of voice. He's a great young talent, so he's already thinking, 'When I come back I'll do this and that'.

"I was pleased to hear that. It's a long road ahead, but his mind is already turning in the right direction."

Glory's eight-match unbeaten run will be put to the test when they take on fourth-placed Wellington at HBF Park on Friday night.

Perth skipper Diego Castro is no guarantee to return while he recovers from a recent knock, while Juande (groin) will miss another week.

But defender Osama Malik is available for selection after recovering from a hamstring tear and a series of subsequent niggles that followed.

Wellington have won four of their past five matches, and welcome back midfielder Matti Steinmann (suspension) and Reno Piscopo (Olyroos duty).

Meanwhile, Glory are in talks with Football Federation Australia about shifting their final-round game against Central Coast forward by one or two days.

The game is currently scheduled for Sunday, April 26 in Perth.

But with Glory's Asian Champions League fixture against Shanghai Shenhua now moved to April 28 in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, it means Perth will play two games in three days unless the Mariners fixture is changed.

"I'm sure if there is a window of opportunity to help the clubs, and I'm sure they (FFA) will," Popovic said.



Leigh Broxham will miss Friday's Melbourne derby with a leg injury.

ROUND PREVIEW

MELBOURNE CITY v MELBOURNE VICTORY
AAMI Park, Friday, 7.30pm

TAB Odds: City \$2.20, Draw \$3.30, Victory \$3.20

DAVUTOVIC'S VERDICT: Victory 3-2

PERTH GLORY v WELLINGTON PHOENIX
HBF Park, Friday, 9.45pm

TAB Odds: Glory \$1.80, Draw \$3.80, Phoenix \$4

DAVUTOVIC'S VERDICT: 1-1 DRAW

SYDNEY FC v WESTERN SYDNEY
Jubilee Stadium, Saturday, 5pm

TAB Odds: Sky Blues \$1.68, Draw \$4, Wanderers \$4.50

DAVUTOVIC'S VERDICT: Sydney FC 3-2

BRISBANE ROAR v ADELAIDE UNITED
Suncorp Stadium, Saturday, 7.30pm

TAB Odds: Roar \$3, Draw \$3.60, United \$2.25

DAVUTOVIC'S VERDICT: 1-1 DRAW

NEWCASTLE JETS v CENTRAL COAST
Hunter Stadium, Sunday, 4pm

TAB Odds: Jets \$1.62, Draw \$4.20, Mariners \$5

DAVUTOVIC'S VERDICT: Jets 2-1