



By George Stavroulakis

Melbourne City hasn't been able to buy a win in New Zealand in recent times and so it would be again when a pair of Englishman teamed up for Wellington Phoenix to make it four straight losses across the ditch for City.

## A-League: Melbourne City falls 1-0 to Wellington Phoenix



Phoenix celebrate David Ball's goal, which would be the eventual matchwinner.

**Wellington's English** strikers have combined to sweet effect in a 1-0 win over Melbourne City, continuing the visitors' A-League hoodoo in New Zealand.

**David Ball** scored the 58th-minute winner off a Gary Hooper assist to decide an open affair on Saturday at Auckland's Eden Park, keeping the Phoenix ensconced in fifth place, just three points behind second-placed City.

**Melbourne had** plenty of chances to come away with points and make ground on leaders Sydney FC but were wasteful in front of goal, particularly in the second half.

**Nine different** City players recorded shots on goal and Phoenix goalkeeper Stefan Marinoic registered seven saves, compared to one from counterpart Tom Glover.

**The lack** of finishing meant the visitors recorded a fourth-successive loss to the Phoenix on Kiwi soil and continued their overall struggles this season on the road.

**Phoenix dominated** possession their 352 passes in the first half was double that of City but they lacked the cutting edge of the visitors.

**There was** concern among the crowd of 15,300 when Phoenix winger Reno Piscopo limped from the field with an apparent ankle injury.

**Midfielder Matti** Steinmann looked to have scored his first Phoenix goal when he tapped in a Piscopo free kick on the half-hour, but VAR determined the German was off-side after a long deliberation.

### MORE FOOTBALL:

**Impressive City** centre back Rostyn Griffiths was earlier forced into a scrambling goal line save but Wellington otherwise struggled to create chances against a deep-sitting defensive line.

**Jamie Maclaren** had two half-chances before the break but squandered both with uncharacteristic weak shots.

**Melbourne's attack** came alive early in the second spell but they conceded against the run of play when former Celtic star Hooper stormed into space down the right and delivered a pinpoint cross to the excellent Ball, whose first touch gave him a fourth goal for the season.

## 3 THINGS WE LEARNED: WHY WANDERERS MUST HOLD ON TO MITCH DUKE

The Wanderers ground out to a frustrating 1-1 draw against cellar dwellers Newcastle Jets, but there one player define the side for any future Wanderers manager.

### DUKE & THE DOTTED LINE

**Sign him up.** The Wanderers can't afford not to. **Re-signing Duke** would go a long way for the club putting into place a criteria for who they want their new coach to be.

**Duke was** at his best tonight and while the scoreline mightn't have reflected it, his performance partnering Simon Cox as front man was to die for.

**The Liverpool** local still has the tendency to drift wide to the left, but the benefit is that he is influencing where the ball goes in the final third, rather than building up further behind.

**But his** efforts on the park stretch beyond his performance on the ball. Duke's re-signing for the Wanderers is more important off the park. You can see in his tenacity and drive he embodies everything the club claims it represents.

**He even** had a rare piece of trickery in his locker to loop past John Koutroubis in the second half.

**The Wanderers** executives aren't rushing their next appointment. You wanted a blueprint to replace Markus Babel? Your man is Mitch Duke.

**Angus Thurgate** has been Newcastle's best young player

### GIVE IT TO THE KIDS

**Despite a** win and a draw in Carl Robinson's first two matches, the season is over for Newcastle Jets. So, off to find positives in their campaign. Bleeding in some youngsters isn't a bad shout.

**If your** chances of making the finals are all but dashed bringing in a handful of players into the first team to bring some life is a good foundation to build on for next season.

**The Wanderers** did something similar in Babel's first season where we saw the introduction of Mohamed Adam, Tate Russell and Tass Mourdoukoutas who have gone on to get plenty of senior minutes and fit in at A-League level, and all it took was half a season.

### OLD TRICKS SOUR DRAW BUT POSITIVES IN SIGHT

**Some old** story. Struggle to convert their chances and cop a late equaliser, despite having a sensational opening 20 minutes.

**The ired** of Babel haven't been totally flushed out since his departure, but a change like this was never going to happen quickly.

**Luckily for** the Wanderers they've taken four points from a possible six under de Marigny. With their next two games also in Sydney they will have spent over a month in their own backyard.

**A start** for Simon Cox is a promising sign for the Wanderers interim coach while significant improvements have been made by Bruce Kamau who was sending Bobby Burns on a merry dance in the game at right wing-back.

### Match Centres

	ADL	FINAL	CCM		WSW	FINAL	NEW	
2	Stats	0	1	Stats	1			
	WEL	FINAL	MCY		WUN	FINAL	BRI	
1	Stats	0	0	Stats	1			