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FORMER PERTH GLORY PLAYER XAVIER TORRES JAILED FOR MATCH-FIXING

TWO YEARS AGO, HE WAS COMPETING ALONGSIDE SOME OF AUSTRALIA'S BEST FOOTBALLERS, BUT XAVIER TORRES HAS NOW BEEN HANDED A ONE-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR MATCH-FIXING.

Two former La Liga footballers have been given one-year prison sentences in a landmark case marking the first successful prosecution for match-fixing in Spain.

The former Real Betis players Antonio Amaya and Xavier Torres, who played for A-League club Perth Glory in 2017/18 under coach Kenny Lowe, were on Friday convicted of fixing two games in the 2013/14 season.

Five then-Osasuna directors, and two real estate agents, were also convicted. The Provincial Court of Navarra concluded that then-Osasuna directors Miguel Archanco, Juan Antonio Pascual and Jesus Peralta, together with then-general manager of

the club Angel Maria Vizcay, made a deal with the two players in a bid to help Osasuna escape relegation from Spain's first division.

According to the court's verdict, Amaya and Torres agreed to be paid an initial 400,000 euros (AU\$678,482) if they beat Osasuna's relegation rivals Real Valladolid in the penultimate game of the season, and a further 250,000 euros for losing the last match of the season away to Osasuna.

The penalties imposed on the convicted varied from eight years and eight months for Vizcay, for crimes of misappropriation, forgery, and corruption in sport; to the one-



Diego Castro and Xavier Torres in April 2018

year sentences for corruption in sport given to Amaya and Torres. Ex-club treasurer Sancho Bandres and real estate agents Cristina Valencia and Albert Nolla were also found guilty.

Another former Betis player, Jordi Figueras, and former Osasuna Foundation president Diego Maquiritain were acquitted.

Betis lost 2-1 away at Osasuna on the last

day of the 2013/14 season but Osasuna were still relegated because of other results.

"La Liga is happy, not for the convictions of people, but to see a move forward against corruption in football," Spanish League president Javier Tebas said in a statement. **Torres played** 24 games for Perth Glory in the 2017/18 summer, scoring four goals in the season.

VIDUKA, FARINA, BOZZA: THE FFA'S STAR-STUDED NEW PANEL TO TURN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL AROUND

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA HAS UNVEILED A GROUNDBREAKING NEW ADVISORY PANEL THAT COULD REVOLUTIONISE THE DIRECTION OF THE CODE – AND FANS HAVE BEEN CALLING FOR IT FOR YEARS.

A few short weeks ago, the A-League was in full swing.

Wellington Phoenix was firing on all cylinders while Sydney FC marching towards another title with typical swagger. Western Utd was enjoying a rollercoaster of a debut season while young guns like the Toure brothers put their names in lights.

Then the coronavirus struck, and the outlook for Australian football suddenly looked bleak. Players and staff were thrust into isolation and uncertainty. Some returned to overseas homes – some may not return.

But if ever a reason for optimism about the future was needed, the Football Federation Australia just delivered in spades. Monday's announcement of a new advisory panel could be the gamechanger Australian football needs to guide the development of the next 'golden generation' – and tackle the game's biggest issues.

The panel, called the 'Starting XI', features a variety of Australia's greatest past players, coaches, and innovators. They will come together to advise the FFA on a range of tough issues, "from grassroots to international football, national teams, player pathways, and the overall wellbeing of the game", as CEO James Johnson said in a statement.

The illustrious panel includes a number of former Socceroos stars: Mark Bosnich, Josip Skoko, Mark Viduka, Frank Farina, and Paul Okon. It's a group that spans the media, coaching,

and player development world.

Then there's trailblazers in the women's game: Heather Garriock, Clare Polkinghorne, Vicki Linton, Joey Peters, and Connie Selby. Many of those were (or still are) top players before becoming respected names in coaching and player development.

There's also Ron Smith, a former Perth Glory coach most recognisable for his leadership of the AIS (Australian Institute for Sport) football academy, which was hugely influential in the development of the so-called golden generation of Socceroos which starred at the 2006 and 2010 World Cups.

Each will serve "an initial two-year term on a voluntary basis", the FFA statement reveals.

They will work with the organisation's Football Development Committee (FDC) – which also includes former Socceroo Mark Bresciano and former Matilda Amy Duggan – and engage with a number of coaches of national teams of various ages including both senior squads.

ANALYSIS

In short, the FFA has reached out to Australian football legends to fix problems at every level of the football pyramid. **Just a** couple of weeks ago Dukes spoke out stridently about the FFA's handling of the world game in Australia. One of

James Johnson has assembled 'eleven of our best football brains'



Former Socceroos coach Frank Farina has plenty of knowledge to impart

Australia's greatest strikers and captains blasted the FFA for not better utilising his knowledge and passion of the game, and criticised its youth development program in a scorching interview.

Rather than run from his criticism (as prior leaders of the organisation have in the past), the FFA has done the opposite – and should be praised for it.

Despite being in the middle of a pressing crisis, Johnson has managed to create a platform for what he calls "eleven of our best football brains" to ensure the organisation is developing the long-term future of the sport.

Viduka and the other 10 members of the panel who have volunteered to be a part of the project are not just some of our finest football minds, they are also some of our most passionate.

We have heard many promises in the past about Australian football. Many opportunities have slipped away. Let us hope this is the beginning of a new path forward.

It is very much a long-overdue move, and goes some way towards proving James Johnson's claim that the FFA under his leadership would put football first.

The FFA has had any number of panels, reviews, largely unsuccessful attempts to right the ship in recent years.

But this one is unprecedented in its depth and breadth. **The surprise** inclusion of Mark Viduka stands out the most.