



By George Stavroulakis

JETS' FATE IN HANDS OF RIVALS



Their form is as good as most A-League teams, but Newcastle's chances of making the finals will hinge more on other clubs results than their own.

Newcastle coach Carl Robinson's says his surging A-League club's finals fate won't be in their own hands, despite an impressive late-season charge.

The Jets spent several weeks at the bottom of the ladder, but Tuesday's shock 2-1 away win over runaway leaders Sydney lifted them one spot to eighth.

The victory put them level on points with seventh-placed Western United, who have played three less matches and three behind sixth-placed Adelaide, who have one game in hand.

They have won four of their last five and lost just one of seven since Welshman Robinson took over in February.

Newcastle have more than doubled their wins and points totals from the first 16 matches they played before he arrived.

Robinson acknowledged Newcastle needed other results to go their way in addition to winning all of their last four games to have any chance of making the finals

"I think the teams that have got games in hand are in the driving seat," Robinson said.

"We were in a very good run of form prior to the break and the boys have picked it straight back up.

"It was a great game for us because we had nothing to lose. We need to win four games probably to get into the playoffs but it's not in our hands.

"If other teams take care of their business we might just fall a little bit short.

"But what we can do is play the way we did today, which I thought was terrific, and get as many points on the board

and then what will be will be."

The Jets' next game is on Friday against old rivals Central Coast Mariners in Gosford.

Newcastle's win on Tuesday was earned by a late strike and first A-League goal for substitute Kosta Petratos, all of whose six appearances this season have come off the bench.

"I'm pleased for him because the amount of work he puts in is second to none," Robinson said of Petratos.

"The professionalism he shows is terrific. He doesn't complain or moan."

The pass for the winner came from Kosta's brother Dimi, who also started the game on the bench, along with a third Petratos sibling, Yerasimakis.

STOP TALKING ABOUT CASTRO - POPOVIC BRISTLES AT FOCUS ON ABSENT STAR

Tony Popovic says his focus is on Perth Glory players who have committed to seeing out the A-League campaign rather than the impact of Diego Castro's absence.

Perth coach Tony Popovic has bristled at suggestions Glory will take time to find their feet without Diego Castro, saying they've moved on without the A-League great.

Popovic's revamped side made a satisfying return to action against Central Coast Mariners with a 1-0 win but are sure to be fully tested by Wellington Phoenix at Bankwest Stadium on Wednesday.

Glory can leapfrog the Kiwi club into third place if victorious, which would in turn hand Wellington a second-straight defeat after their 3-1 loss to Sydney FC.

It will be a good gauge for the Perth fresh attacking unit, with Jake Brimmer likely to again be fielded further forward in place of the absent Castro while Popovic's teenage sons - 18-year-old midfielder Kristian and 16-year-old striker Gabriel (16) - are in line to start again.

There could be a change if the coach deems Nick D'Agostino ready to resume up front, having lashed the young marksman last week for a lack of fitness upon return from lockdown.

Popovic was not impressed when asked if

he was satisfied with how his players had adjusted in their first game without veteran Castro.

The Spanish midfield wizard announced last week he would not join Glory at their NSW hub because of COVID-19 health fears.

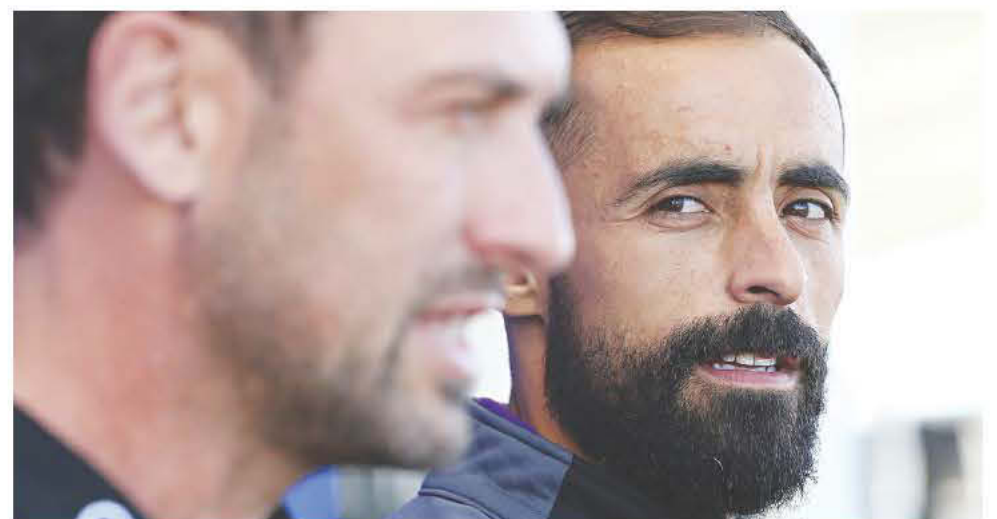
His absence wasn't an issue, as far as Popovic was concerned, pointing out there were other adjustments to make because of the departures of defensive imports Gregory Wuthrich and Kim Soo-Beom, along with injuries to mainstays such as Chris Ikonmidis.

"If it wasn't for these questions, I wouldn't even speak about this any more," Popovic said.

"We've just played a game of football and I'd like to think there are some better statements and questions to make.

"Maybe (goalscoring defender) Dane Ingham playing, maybe Kristian, an 18-year-old playing, maybe a 16-year-old starting up front. Maybe Jake Brimmer (22) playing.

"I think there are other things we could discuss, which are positive from the match, instead of keep looking back."



Popovic said his experienced core led the way in Gosford, heaping praise on 34-year-old Neil Kilkenny, who has assumed the captaincy from Castro.

"He's been a leader from the outset, since I've been at the club," Popovic said of Kilkenny. **"I think** it shone throughout the game in the way he performed."

Wellington coach Ufuk Talay is likely to consider changes, including starting spots for underdone star imports Ulises Davila and Gary Hooper.

Both came off the bench against Sydney. **Ball-winning midfielder** Cameron Devlin is also set to return after missing the restart through suspension.