

Socceroo striker Mathew Leckie gets airborne against Iraq in Perth last night.  
Picture: GETTY IMAGES



## WORLD CUP QUALIFIER



AUSTRALIA

IRAQ

2

0

Luongo 58,  
Juric 64

Crowd: 18,923 at nib Stadium  
Referee: Faghani Alireza

### SOCCEROOS LINE-UP (4-4-2)

Ryan; Degenek, Sainsbury, Milligan, Smith; Rogic, Jedinak, Mooy, Luongo (Irvine 78); Leckie (Giannou 85), Juric (Kruse 65).

# Aussies breach wall

THE Socceroos made a successful start to the final stage of their World Cup qualifying campaign with a 2-0 win against Iraq in Perth last night.

Second-half goals from Massimo Luongo and Tomi Juric broke Iraq's resistance, on a night when Mathew Leckie and Aaron Mooy hit the woodwork.

Coach Ange Postecoglou's men will travel to the United Arab Emirates for their second assignment on Wednesday morning in good heart, even if they did make heavy weather of finishing off the visitors.

Their task next week will be made tougher by last night's other Group B result in which

## TOM SMITHIES

the UAE upset Japan 2-1 in Saitama.

Defensively, Australia had few scares last night against a side intent on squeezing out a goalless draw.

For much of the first half the game was a mismatch, and yet oddly unsatisfactory for the 18,923 fans squeezed in NIB Stadium. Australia held a huge advantage in terms of possession, but too often handed the ball back to Iraq with few real threats on goal.

The game almost began in spectacular fashion for the Socceroos. Before five seconds had elapsed Tom Rogic had

slipped the ball into the path of Juric, whose left-foot shot was beaten away by goalkeeper Ahmed Ibrahim.

On 11 minutes, Luongo's powerful drive from distance flew narrowly wide and, just before the half-hour, the move of the half almost bore fruit.

Rogic's quick ball to the left wing prompted an early cross from Brad Smith and Leckie's looping header hit the post.

When, on 35 minutes, Mile Jedinak's point-blank header flew over, with the goalkeeper nowhere to be seen, Australia's frustration levels grew.

Both Jedinak and Luongo had been careless with the ball at times, accentuating the

## LEAKY CITY SIGNS DANE

MELBOURNE City hopes former Danish international Michael Jakobsen will be the answer to its defensive woes.

City leaked 44 goals in last season's 27 games, and only Central Coast and Wellington conceded more in the A-League.

Jakobsen, 30, has signed a two-year deal. He will lead City's defence with Connor

congestion in central midfield.

Iraq's lack of ambition was palpable. It was quite happy to trap its opponents in a midfield morass.

Chapman and Osama Malik.

The left-footer, whose best stints were with Danish clubs Aalborg BK and Esbjerg, also featured for Guus Hiddink's PSV Eindhoven in the Netherlands and Almeria in Spain's top flight. Jakobsen will join the City squad during a pre-season camp in Townsville next week.

DAVID DAVUTOVIC

The second half brought a greater sense of urgency, and suddenly chances were coming. On 55 minutes, Jedinak's early ball was driven into the

box by Leckie and met by Mooy with a lunging drive that crashed off the bar.

Then Leckie produced a run down the right and low cross that Juric somehow turned wide.

But, seconds later, Luongo saved his blushes when he swept home Juric's low cross to the far post.

Six minutes later Juric almost scored, twisting and turning in the box before his shot was saved, but from the resultant corner Mark Milligan's flick-on was stabbed home at the near post by Juric.

The striker was then replaced by Robbie Kruse.

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