

Massimo's form hard to ignore

DAVID DAVUTOVIC

MIDFIELDER Massimo Luongo looks set to be rewarded for last week's role as an impact player with a start against Japan in tomorrow's World Cup qualifier.

The 2015 Asian Cup player of the tournament has started the past two qualifiers, both in the Middle East, on the bench as Ange Postecoglou struggles to fit in all of his in-form midfielders.

More than 45,000 fans are expected at Etihad Stadium, where the roof could be closed because of rain.

Luongo scored and impressed in his last start, the 2-0 win over Iraq in Perth a month ago, and Postecoglou praised his QPR and Socceroos form.

"We're really strong (in midfield)," Postecoglou said. "Mass was unlucky not to start the other night. When he came on again, as in the UAE, he really drove us forward."

"He's flying. I've watched QPR the last couple of weeks



and he's really going well and he's another that can score.

"He scored against Iraq, from midfield areas he gets into good positions.

"We've got some good depth. We've got Jackson (Irvine), he looks like every camp he comes in stronger and this camp he looks even more confident and stronger than last.

"Again a midfielder who can score goals. They are the underlying things we're looking at that for us is getting pretty exciting. We're going to have some real strong options in those areas."

Postecoglou hasn't decided on his XI but the Socceroos yesterday conducted a review of the 2-2 draw with Saudi Arabia.

While there are no injury concerns, Postecoglou said there would be new faces.

"There won't be a lot of changes but we'll make at least a couple because we've got an opportunity to do that because we've got some players in the squad who didn't play in the first game and have got a bit of energy about them," he said.

Talk of the Town

Roo star Mooy also a huge hit with Huddersfield fans

DAVID DAVUTOVIC

THE Aaron Mooy project is one of the most intriguing experiments in Australian sport.

Owned by the world's richest football firm City Football Group, which is bankrolled by Sheikh Mansour from Abu Dhabi's ruling family, Mooy has been loaned to an unfashionable English second-tier club.

Yet Huddersfield Town, the birthplace of rugby league, is defying the odds and topping the English Championship.

Mooy, as his August nomination for the league player-of-the-month award indicates, has been vital.

His loan move was viewed cynically in Australia after Luke Brattan's identical journey backfired last season. But his deft touch and extraordinary game awareness led to at least 12 offers from four European leagues, including Belgians Club Brugge.

At 26, Mooy is no kid. But his sudden impact at Huddersfield Town suggests he will be ready for the next challenge.

Mooy signed a three-year deal with Man City, who bought him from Melbourne City and loaned him to the Terriers for a season with a view to eventually selling him.

A question that seemed implausible three months ago is now being asked. Is Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola watching Mooy?

The midfielder reluctantly broaches the Sky Blues subject, not for a lack of confidence but rather a fear of looking beyond "project Huddersfield 2016-17".

"The plan was to give me an opportunity to play in Europe and see how good I can become," Mooy said.

"I'm proud of myself. If one day I was to play for Man City, I'd be happy and proud.

"I'll just take it one season at a time and see how far I can go. I'm not putting pressure on myself to do that, I'm just trying to become the best I can be.

"They (CFG) helped a lot

and have followed my progress. Every week someone calls (usually CFG football chief Brian Marwood).

"It feels good to be with (CFG), feels like I'm still part of Melbourne City."

Winning promotion with Huddersfield, who are managed by Liverpool boss Jürgen Klopp's best mate David Wagner, is the goal but Mooy is reluctant to dream.

Terriers fans have fallen in love with their new No.10, who's style has been likened to Zinedine Zidane.

"I've been surprised, I didn't know if they would like my style, but they seem to enjoy it. Hopefully they like me at the end of the season," Mooy said.

"I didn't know what to expect, it's still only 11 games in. Everyone's talking like it's the end of the season, I'm not getting carried away.

"There was a variety of (offers). Huddersfield was a good fit, I met the manager (Wagner) and his high-pressing, possession style was similar to the Socceroos and has worked well for me.

"There's competition so I need to play well to keep my spot. It's good, puts pressure on me to perform. I always believe in myself.

"That (promotion) would be a fairytale. It's good to be at the top, it's still early."

Mooy's agent Paddy Dominguez expects him to play in the Premier League in 2017.

"He's following a plan," he said. "The purpose of playing for Huddersfield was to prepare him for the Premier League next season and by then I expect he'll be 100 per cent ready.

Melbourne City foresaw his emergence, quadrupling his salary cap wage to a coveted \$1 million-a-year plus a marquee slot in 2015-16, when he went on to score 11 and assist 21 times.

Coach John van 't Schip expected Mooy to sign for a Premier League team this season.

"I saw Aaron every day and often he was at a different level," van 't Schip said.

MOOY'S SEASON

Club: Huddersfield Town

League: English Championship

Games: 11 (out of 11)

Minutes: 956 (out of 990)

Goals: 1

Assists: 1

Chances created: 20

Completed passes: 652

Pass accuracy: 86%

CHAMPIONSHIP TOP 6

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
1 Huddersfield	11	8	12	+6	25	
2 Norwich	11	7	2	2	+6	23
3 Newcastle U	11	7	13	+12	22	
4 Brighton	11	6	3	2	+7	21
5 Bristol City	11	6	2	3	+7	20
6 Birmingham	11	5	5	1	+5	20

English fans are finding out what all the fuss is about with Socceroos star Aaron Mooy. Picture: Getty Images

Fighting Jets push champions Adelaide all the way

BARRY TOOHEY

THEY lost their coach a month ago and their goalkeeper during the build-up to the opening round.

But the Newcastle Jets lost no admirers after holding A-League champions Adelaide to a 1-all draw at McDonald Jones Stadium yesterday.

It wasn't the win new coach Mark Jones had craved after

	NEWCASTLE	1
	ADELAIDE	1

taking the reins from sacked former coach Scott Miller little more than a fortnight ago.

But his players showed plenty of ticker and more than enough enterprise to suggest they won't be easybeats this season. Jones believed his side had done enough to possibly

even secure all three points. "Probably a little disappointed in the end," he said of the stalemate.

"We didn't dominate the whole game but I thought we had the better of the opportunities and we hung in there when things were against us.

"We were a little sloppy on a few occasions but we had the opportunity to score goals."

Adding weight to the performance was the loss of striker

Aleksandr Kokko to an achilles injury in the first half and defenders Jason Hoffman (calf) and Daniel Mullen (knee) after the break.

The setbacks didn't put the home side off.

Wayne Brown and Andrew Nabbout, in particular, were impressive in their Jets debuts.

Andrew Hoole was another to stretch the Adelaide defence but will rue a missed opportunity from point-blank range

in the first half that would have put his side 2-0 up and a late chance that was snuffed out after he had keeper Eugene Galekovic beaten.

The Jets started nervously, were under early pressure and forced to scramble defensively in the box a number of times to keep the Reds at bay. But the first real chance of the game fell to the home side after an embarrassing lapse from Galekovic at the 16-minute mark.



Adelaide's Benjamin Garuccio and Jet Andrew Nabbout.