

Cranky Frankie launches ref rant

BRADEN QUARTERMAINE

EMBATTLED Sydney FC coach Frank Farina blasted the officiating of the A-League after a controversial goal was enough for Perth Glory to sink the Sky Blues 1-0 at nib Stadium yesterday.

Farina claimed mistakes by officials were deciding the outcome of matches and called for the introduction of video reviews after Sydney lost its third consecutive match, despite dominating the encounter.

Glory midfielder Steven McGarry settled the contest from the penalty spot in just the ninth minute after a clear missed offside call.

The Sky Blues were desperately unlucky to concede, with

PERTH GLORY V SYDNEY FC

PERTH GLORY 1
(Steven McGarry 9m pen) bt
SYDNEY FC 0 at nib Stadium.
Crowd: 10,613. Referee: Ben Williams.

the assistant referee failing to flag Ryo Nagai's offside run, before the Japanese attacker was crudely brought down by goalkeeper Vedran Janjetovic. Nagai had found plenty of space and chested down a nice ball from Jamie Maclaren, before Janjetovic crashed into his back.

Referee Ben Williams pointed to the spot and handed the

Sydney FC keeper a yellow card. "The foul was a foul, but I thought it was offside," Farina said. "It's not good enough. Days like this you wish you were playing rugby league or rugby union, where those things won't happen (because of the use of technology).

"Unfortunately in our game it does and it's not the first time this season in four rounds: not just for us, but for other teams. The people that are not involved on that square, (where players) are actually playing and combating, are deciding how games go. For me that's a sad indictment of where we're heading.

"People will say you're bitching and you're complaining, but we're in a massive business, a

massive industry. "If you're going to have people that are semi-professional determining results of this massive industry, where a lot of money is being spent, that to me is wrong and it's sad and it has to be looked at.

"Unfortunately, that guy goes back to his job mid-week and then he'll get another game next week."

Marquee stars Alessandro Del Piero and Shane Smeltz made substitute cameo returns from injury, as Glory had goalkeeper Danny Vukovic to thank for some late heroics for the second week running.

Vukovic deflected a stinging shot from Matt Thompson onto the upright in the 83rd minute.

Del Piero hit the back of the

net in stoppage time but the flag had already gone up to signal teammate Yairo Yau was offside.

Glory coach Alistair Edwards conceded his men were below their best but praised his side's character and likened the contest to a boxing match.

"Today we didn't perform as well as we would have liked," Edwards said.

Glory has now kept three consecutive clean sheets for the first time in six years.

JETS HELD: The Newcastle Jets broke their marathon goal-scoring drought but remain without a win after four rounds of the A-League following a 2-2 draw with defending champions Central Coast Mariners at Hunter Stadium last night.



Croatia faces Iceland in the World Cup playoffs on November 15 and 19, your views?

Under new boss Niko Kovac Croatia should qualify. I was a teammate of Niko's and he's a no-nonsense character, he reminds me very much of Western Sydney coach Tony Popovic and that brutal honesty separates him from the rest.

How do you rate this crop of players?

It's a golden generation for Croatia, the best generation since the 1998 World Cup. Now there's Luka Modric (Real Madrid), Mario Mandzukic (Bayern Munich), Mateo Kovacic (Inter Milan), Ivan Rakitic (Seville) who are at big clubs and playing regularly, so it would be a disaster if they didn't qualify.

Your former Ajax teammate Zlatan Ibrahimovic's Sweden faces Portugal. Is he as crazy as they say?

Crazy's an understatement, but I say that with the greatest respect. He's a genius, he's so confident and he knows what he wants. I spent three years with him at Ajax. The World Cup needs Zlatan there more than Cristiano Ronaldo.

What was the 2006 World Cup experience like?

It was surreal. We had Aussie boys Josip Simunic and Ante Seric in the Croatian team while the Socceroos included many boys with Croatian backgrounds, Mark Viduka, Josip Skoko, Zeljko Kalac, Jason Culina, Mark Bresciano and Tony Popovic. When I walked on to the pitch before the game everyone knew each other.

Why did you choose Croatia over the Socceroos?

It came down to timing. Australian soccer was a shambles with the NSL finishing and the Socceroos playing a few times a year against Solomon Islands and co. Croatia approached me and offered me a guaranteed place at Euro 2004 and I went to Germany 2006. It wasn't a hard football decision but emotionally it was difficult, I love Australia. But no regrets, not many people get to swap tops with Zinedine Zidane, Ronaldinho and David Beckham at major tournaments? I was so close to playing for the Socceroos though that I had my own top printed, for the February 2003 friendly against England.

What are you doing now?
I'm the keeper coach at Melbourne Heart.

WA WATCH

Rhys Williams celebrated his looming Socceroos selection with a top performance in Middlesbrough's 4-0 win over Doncaster. Meanwhile Dylan Tombides is edging closer to a senior return after featuring on West Ham's bench in their 2-0 League Cup win over Burnley.

FIXTURES

*All games live on Fox Sports

Tonight
Everton v Tottenham, 9:30pm
Cardiff v Swansea, midnight

Saturday
Aston Villa v Cardiff, 11pm*
Chelsea v West Brom, 11pm*
Crystal Palace v Everton, 11pm*
Liverpool v Fulham, 11pm*
Southampton v Hull, 11pm*
Norwich v West Ham, 1:30am

David Davutovic



No joy: Sydney's Alessandro Del Piero pleads with the referee yesterday.
Picture: Will Russell

Room to improve but points gold

THREE points is three points but yesterday's win over Sydney FC leaves us with plenty of scope for improvement.

Keeping three consecutive clean sheets is a great achievement. However at the same time we need to remain mindful of the need to improve our performances at home.

We were by no means at our best yesterday and the Sky Blues caused us plenty of problems.

Having said that, it's another

Shane Smeltz



valuable three points and we climb that ladder. It's still difficult to get a gauge on where exactly Perth Glory sits because we are yet to play some of the teams I expect to be the best this season.

We will have some tougher tests down the track against the

likes of Central Coast, Brisbane and Western Sydney.

I felt great after the game last night after playing 20 minutes in my comeback from hip surgery.

It was a good blowout and the outing gives me a huge amount of confidence.

There was a bit of a half chance there for me late in the game and I was lunging for it, but hopefully in a couple of weeks when I'm back with Glory we will see a few more chances and I'll be putting

those away. In an ideal world, of course I would have liked to have had more game time under my belt ahead of going away with the New Zealand team but I'm confident I can play my part in our playoffs against Mexico.

Wellington Phoenix is upset that it will be missing five of its best players for the A-League match against Glory on Saturday after being ruled out by New Zealand Football ahead of our departure.

The club versus country debate is always a touchy subject and I can empathise with both sides of it. It's my understanding that playing the A-League game in Christchurch has created additional logistical issues.

If I was the coach of the national team I would make the same call. Chances to go to the World Cup don't come around often so if the A-League has to take a back seat once every four years then so be it.

Former Socceroo Craig Moore pours cold water on the Glory's decision to sign William Gallas @ perthnow.com.au

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