

IN THE NET #24

Amazing!

The old "let's create a crisis" ploy worked for Aurelio Vidmar and Adelaide United is into its second ALeague Final and has booked an unprecedented third ticket to the Asian Champions League.

One week ago, the only ticket Vidmar looked like securing was of the 'one way' variety, taking him out of the club and maybe even the city.

But following Fabien Barbiero's first half wonder strike, one big ugly monkey is off United's back, but there's still a gorilla to deal with.

So how does Aurelio Vidmar construct a game plan that can take United past Melbourne Victory to the A-League summit?

Looking at the numbers the odds look insurmountable.

Melbourne has won its past four games, and seven straight at home.

Adelaide has lost all five matches against the Victory this season and hasn't scored against them since the 2-3 home defeat in October.

Adelaide's 08/09 away record is shocking with just three wins and six goals scored

The two teams also apparently played in a Grand Final in 2007, which I'm told Melbourne won quite easily.

But more importantly, Melbourne embarrassed Adelaide in the Major Semi final, and that's what the Reds will need to focus on regarding dishing out any so called revenge.

In truth only one player from that devastating game in February '07 is likely to be in a Red shirt on Saturday night.

Travis Dodd may have some personal demons to exorcise but Angelo Costanzo, Diego and Michael Valkanis will most likely be relying on their team mates.

Why should the others be carrying any mental scars?

The South African cricket team made exactly this point during it recent Test and One Day Series triumph in Australia.

Although on their previous visit they had been humbled, this was a new team playing without fear.

Adelaide will probably have some fear of its recent history with Melbourne, but the team Aurelio Vidmar takes to Melbourne will be nothing like the 2007 model.

And we should be thankful that at least it will be a team, because it's something that's been missing from Adelaide's game recently.

As we saw last night, football isn't about personal glories, it's all about the team.

Only a solid team effort by Adelaide United got them over the line against a Queensland Roar side that on any other day might have scored a hatful of goals.

The visitors dominated possession, time in opponent's territory, shots at goal and corners, but didn't have the poise to convert their numerous opportunities.

And as we have seen in the Asian Champions League, Adelaide knows how to soak up the pressure and grind out a result.

They have certainly forgotten that in recent times and it almost cost them their season, but Aurelio Vidmar's calculated "pissant" and "politics" rant did the trick.

It stopped the rot long enough for the Reds to set-up another massively anticipated clash with their fiercest rivals.

Those two 'p' words were replaced by some others last night, namely, passion, pride, persistence, patience, poise and pressure.

There was passion for the Red shirt and pride in the performance as much as for their reputation as anything else.

Scott Jamieson was so brave to battle through 90 minutes with an obvious ankle injury.

There was patience in needing to wait for the opportunity to score, because as we expected Queensland had a lot of the ball.

But to make sure the Roar could not damage Adelaide with it required pressure on their opponents and persistence to hang in there for the entire game.

Barbiero's second A-League goal was a strike of wonderful poise, and had he possessed a little more Fabian would have made it two nil early in the second half.

And all those elements will be required if a rampant Melbourne is to be stopped in its tracks.

Queensland might have been able to, but Adelaide certainly will not be able to 'out Melbourne' Melbourne.

Aurelio Vidmar admitted as much during the week when he said that Adelaide doesn't have any real stars and relies on a team effort to get results as opposed to moments of individual brilliance.

Apologies to Fabian Barbiero!

The Victory though has plenty of ALeague giants, Hernandez, Allsopp and Thompson to name just three.

It will be a clash of styles, and if Adelaide wins it probably won't be pretty.

But ultimately it is only the result we will remember.

To get the right result for Adelaide somehow Vidmar must get his midfield match ups spot on.

Players will need to close down and track back as Melbourne's midfield has been given far too much latitude against Adelaide this season.

And while Kevin Muscat's leadership skills can only be described as inspirational, it's time for Travis Dodd to do likewise for Adelaide.

Dodd hasn't scored for ten games and quite simply is due.

And Adelaide is also due to beat Melbourne, so why not next week?

Interestingly despite the one sided nature of their clashes this season, bookmakers only have Adelaide \$2.60-\$2.80 for the win compared to Melbourne \$1.35-\$1.45.

Maybe they're basing their odds on what happened in last year's AFL GF when the supposedly unbeatable Cats suddenly weren't.

Or just maybe, they also feel that Adelaide is due.

Of course we have no idea what will happen, but my feeling is like it was last night, whoever scores first will win.

And another thing:

With all the comment about the Aurelio Vidmar's rant, two issues went a little under the radar in the past week.

Why did Kevin Muscat escape unpunished for stamping on Daniel Mullen?

If the referee did see it and deemed it not worthy of any sanction, then that's one thing.

But surely that leaves referee Matthew Breeze open to a please explain from the FFA?

What did he see in that action that he decided wasn't worthy of any kind of punishment?

The lack of action by the FFA on this matter is not good enough.

Nor is it a good to bring a final six into next season's competition.

Ten teams and a final six is quite simply nothing more than a money-driven reward for mediocrity.

Why not leave it as a top four or if you must change at least only increase it to five teams?

The FFA has got most things right so far but a top six for 2009 is not one of them.