



Harry Kewell is mobbed by Melbourne Heart teammates after converting from the penalty spot against Adelaide United yesterday. Picture: DANIEL KALISZ

Griffiths snatches a draw to break Hearts

RYAN Griffiths snatched a crucial point for finals aspirants Adelaide United with a 90th-minute goal in a 2-2 A-League draw with Melbourne Heart at Coopers Stadium yesterday.

The Reds took the lead in the first half through Bruce Djite and looked on track for three consecutive wins for the first time since September 2010 when they lifted the tempo in the second stanza.

However, against the run of play Heart skipper Harry Kewell converted a penalty on the hour mark to draw

level. Patrick Kisnorbo then stunned the home faithful when the former Leeds United man popped up and headed in to give the visitors the lead on 79 minutes.

The Heart were edging closer to snatching all three points when United's January transfer arrival Griffiths scored his first goal for the club on near fulltime.

Neither side created any chances in a dour opening 10 minutes as fan frustration boiled over when Kewell reacted to a spectator.

Kewell looked distressed

by something said from the stands, even gesturing and pointing to a supporter before speaking with referee Kris Griffiths-Jones at the next stoppage in play.

The hosts eventually gave the lacklustre contest a pulse on 22 minutes when Djite opened the scoring.

Melbourne Heart coach John van't Schip was pleased with the result away from home. "It was a good result looking at where Adelaide United have been the last few weeks and where we've come from," he said.

"We even had a chance to go away with three points, but looking at the complete game 2-2 is the right result."

Adelaide United coach Josep Gombau was disappointed to drop points in a home fixture after leading for an hour of the match.

"It was two points lost more than one point gained because we are playing at home and must try to take advantage in our home stadium," he said.

"The result was fair though because we did not have a very good game."

FULL TIME

A-League - Round 16
ADELAIDE UNITED 2 (Bruce Djite 22m, Ryan Griffiths 90m) **drew with**
MELBOURNE HEART 2 (Harry Kewell 61m pen, Patrick Kisnorbo 79m) at Coopers Stadium. **Crowd:** 11,100. **Referee:** Kris Griffiths-Jones.

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS 3 (Anthony Caceres 13m, Daniel McBreen 32m, Matt Simon 45+3m) **d**
NEWCASTLE JETS 0 at Bluetongue Stadium. **Crowd:** 10,920. **Referee:** Jarred Gillett.

Ladder: Brisbane 34, Central Coast 27, Western Sydney 26, Melbourne Victory 23, Adelaide 21, Perth 20, Sydney FC 19, Newcastle 19, Wellington 17, Melbourne Heart 9.

Heavy arsenal

ARSENE Wenger believes the performances of Lukas Podolski and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain in Arsenal's FA Cup win over Coventry demonstrated the impact they can have during the closing weeks of the campaign.

Podolski struck twice yesterday in a 4-0 win as he continues his return to fitness following a hamstring injury.

And Oxlade-Chamberlain impressed in a central midfield role in his first start since injuring his knee on the opening day of the season.

Record signing

MANCHESTER United yesterday confirmed they have agreed a club record deal to sign Spanish midfielder Juan Mata from Chelsea.

United's reported \$70 million move for Mata will be completed subject to the 25-year-old passing a medical and negotiating personal terms with the English Premier League champions.

The transfer would shatter United's previous record fee of \$59 million for Bulgarian forward Dimitar Berbatov from Tottenham in 2008.

Essien to Milan

CHELSEA'S Ghanaian international midfielder Michael Essien, 31, has joined AC Milan, the Italian Serie A side announced yesterday.

Essien arrives on a free transfer having signed an 18-month deal with the northern outfit placed 11th in Serie A. Essien is the first recruit of new Milan coach Clarence Seedorf, and he could play in their Champions League last 16 tie against Atletico Madrid next month with midfielders Riccardo Montolivo and Sulley Muntari suspended.

Fans must pay

GERMAN side Hanover 96 successfully took two supporters to court yesterday to reclaim \$13,400 of UEFA fines handed to the club due to the fans' misbehaviour.

European football's governing body, UEFA, had fined Hanover \$23,600 after crowd trouble during a home Europa League match against Copenhagen in November 2011.

Hanover court has ordered one fan who set off a flare to pay the club \$10,000, while a second supporter who ran on the pitch must pay \$5000.

Zane off to flat start

CENTRAL Coast Mariners recaptured their A-League championship-winning form to claim bragging rights in the 31st F3 derby last night, defeating fierce rivals Newcastle 3-0.

First-half goals from Anthony Caceras, Matt Simon and Daniel McBreen secured victory to lift the Mariners to second on the table.

The win ensured the Jets remained winless at Bluetongue Stadium in more than six years and handed Jets coach Clayton Zane defeat in his first game at the helm.

The Mariners dominated



Clayton Zane

from the get-go and while the Jets were far more spirited in the second half, they could not combat the constant pressure from the defending champions.

Caceras broke the deadlock in sensational style, going on a menacing run from the half-way mark and getting past two defenders before pulling the trigger from 25m out in the 13th minute.

McBreen forced a save from Jets gloveman Mark Birighitti later in the game.

Rogic in run-on side

KEVIN Muscat has ruffled a few feathers in his time but the Melbourne Victory coach has been playing the diplomat over the A-League club's signing of Brisbane Roar striker Besart Berisha.

Berisha will join the Victory in 2014/15 and the following season.

As the Victory prepare to host Sydney FC in today's clash at Etihad Stadium they have been boosted by the buzz around playmaker Tom Rogic, who is set to make his debut for the Victory on loan from Scottish club Celtic.



Mark Milligan

The former Central Coast Mariner has fought for game time at Celtic and may start on the bench.

The Victory will be without Mitch Nichols, who's heading to Japan and skipper Mark Milligan who has had knee surgery.

An offer reportedly worth \$1.6 million from UAE club Baniyas for Milligan has been withdrawn.

The Victory are coming off a 5-0 thrashing from Wellington Phoenix.

Covic slams critics

WESTERN Sydney goalkeeper Ante Covic has hit out at critics who have labelled the Wanderers' back-to-back defeats a form slump and says they'll be out to prove them wrong this weekend.

The reigning premiers will host Perth Glory today, having lost three out of their last four games and looking to rebound from their away losses to Melbourne Victory and Adelaide.

It's the first time the Wanderers have suffered consecutive defeats this season and with the side still



Ante Covic

second on the ladder, Covic said no one at the club felt it was cause for panic.

"People outside the team seem to come up with that," he said.

"We've been a successful team up until now and that seems to be the buzz word — 'form slump' — after two games."

Perth seem to be growing in confidence under new boss Kenny Lowe, holding top dogs Brisbane to a 0-0 draw last week.