

Teen on course for Roos debut

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SOCEROOS coach Ange Postecoglou has signalled he won't be afraid to hand 18-year-old wildcard Riley McGree an international debut in this month's looming crunch World Cup qualifiers.

Adelaide United youngster McGree (pictured) capped his meteoric rise from relative obscurity yesterday by sealing a spot in Australia's final 23-man squad to play Iraq in neutral Tehran on Thursday, March 23, and the UAE in Sydney five days later.

McGree's selection comes after just 12 A-League and two Asian Champions League appearances since breaking into the struggling Reds first team to fill various midfield positions, largely an unfamiliar holding role.

Postecoglou was unconcerned McGree's experience amounted to less than a single professional season, labelling him an exciting future prospect.

"We haven't had in the A-League too many teenagers even getting a run these days — I've never felt like I've needed to sit on these things," Postecoglou said.

"I've always felt if there's somebody there I want to have a look at I'll bring them in.

"I'm not going to wait because in the past we've just waited too long, particularly



with some of our younger players.

"If he does well at training he could play. Obviously I want to bring him in to have a look at him in the environment."

Should McGree get any minutes he'll be nine months older than the youngest — and perhaps greatest Soceroos player — Harry Kewell, who debuted at 17 years and seven months.

Uncapped Sydney FC duo Rhyan Grant and Danny Vukovic also survived the cut as did Perth's Rhys Williams, Melbourne Victory's James Troisi and Denmark-based talent Mustafa Amini.

The seven players axed from the extended 30-man squad were Nathan Burns, Ryan Edwards, Alex Gersbach, Craig Goodwin, Chris Ikonomidis, Awer Mabil and Matt McKay, though Postecoglou hinted at a Goodwin recall in the case of front-third injuries.

The coach acknowledged he took a punt on central defender Trent Sainsbury, who is yet to graduate from Internazionale's training pitch, and predicted he and Bourne-mouth bench regular Brad Smith would likely get through one game each.

He was also confident veteran Tim Cahill would have an impact despite his limited game time for Melbourne City.

Reds stalwart facing end

ADELAIDE United captain Eugene Galekovic could play one of his last games for the club in tonight's Asian Champions League match.

Galekovic is in the frame to return from a shoulder injury for the ACL fixture against Korea's Jeju United in Adelaide.

But his future in Adelaide beyond this season is clouded amid speculation the Reds are on the verge of signing his one-time goalkeeping understudy Paul Izzo, currently at Central Coast.

Adelaide coach Guillermo Amor said he was uncertain about Galekovic's future. "I don't know his future, if he stay here or not," Amor said.

"I don't know — the future, we don't know the future.

"Euge for me is a very important player, a very import-

ant person in Adelaide, in South Australia and in Australia. He's a big player (but) I don't know his future, if he stay here or not."

Amor said he hadn't talked with Galekovic about next season. "We speak about a lot of things, normally the situation and problems of the team and about the future, we don't speak," he said.

Amor also said he hadn't been told of any looming signing of Izzo, a 22-year-old shot-stopper who was Galekovic's understudy in Adelaide from 2011-15.

Amor said his focus was squarely on Adelaide getting its first points of the ACL campaign in tonight's encounter against Jeju United.

The Reds have lost their opening two ACL matches.



Chelsea manager Antonio Conte (right) unloads on Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho during yesterday's dramatic FA Cup quarter-final at Stamford Bridge. Inset: Nemanja Matic congratulates teammate N'Golo Kante after the diminutive Frenchman put Chelsea in front

Conte gets Mourinho again

ANTONIO Conte got the better of Jose Mourinho for the second time this season as Chelsea beat 10-man Manchester United 1-0 at Stamford Bridge to reach the FA Cup semi-finals yesterday.

N'Golo Kante's 51st minute goal was enough for Conte's double-chasing side to break United's resistance after the visitors had Ander Herrera sent off after 35 minutes for a second yellow card — both for crude fouls on Eden Hazard.

Chelsea skipper Gary Cahill said of Kante: "He's been fantastic. You see what he did last season (for Leicester).

"He has come here and he has kicked on again. He's such a humble guy off the pitch, works hard. He's a tremendous addition to the squad and he's won us the game with a goal today, which is great."

United, who face a Europa League last 16 tie tomorrow against Russian club Rostov, were missing the suspended Zlatan Ibrahimovic and injured Wayne Rooney, and offered little threat once Kante had beaten David de Gea with a precise low shot.

While Mourinho was spared the humiliation of the 4-0 thrashing his old club dished out in October's Premier League meeting

— his first return to Stamford Bridge since being sacked last season — he was again found wanting as Chelsea's fans delighted in chanting the name of his successor Conte.

Mourinho's frustration boiled over at times and the Portuguese and Italian Conte had to be separated after an angry exchange shortly after Herrera's sending off left United facing a mammoth task.

"I don't speak. I just want to say that I'm really proud of my players, I'm really proud of Manchester United fans," Mourinho said.

"I think we all watched the match until the red card and after the red card and then we can compare the decision of the two yellow cards in this case with other ones that were not given, but I don't want to go in that direction.

"Mr Michael Oliver — a referee with fantastic potential. Manchester United were a bit unlucky. In four matches, three penalties and one red card in such an early moment of the game but again I cannot change that."

Chelsea will now meet Tottenham in the semi-finals, with Arsenal facing Manchester City in the other semi-final at Wembley on the weekend of April 22-23.

Wawrinka powers into last 16

STAN Wawrinka breezed into the Round of 16 of the Indian Wells ATP Masters event yesterday and saw another seed removed from his path to the final when lucky loser Yoshihito Nishioka, of Japan, turned his match against Tomas Berdych upside down.

Swiss third seed Wawrinka romped past Philipp Kohlschreiber 7-5 6-3 and will next face Nishioka, rather than Berdych, after the 21-year-old Japanese overcame a 6-1 5-2 deficit and survived being match point down for a stunning 1-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-4 win over the 13th-seeded Czech.

The top half of the draw has already lost world No.1 Andy Murray and offers rather smoother sailing than the bottom half, which features multiple grand slam winners Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic, and Australia's Nick Kyrgios, who takes on German Alexander Zverev.

Wawrinka needed just 78 minutes to improve his career record against Germany's Kohlschreiber to 5-0.

"I was serving well," the 31-year-old said. "I think I'm moving better and better, and it's all positive so far."

Eighth seed Dominic Thiem, of Austria, won his third round match against Mischa Zverev 6-1 6-4 while No.10 seed Gael Monfils rolled John Isner 6-2 6-4.

Kerber prevails in the heat

SECOND seed Angelique Kerber put on a determined display yesterday to rally past France's Pauline Parmentier 7-5 3-6 7-5 in the scorching desert heat to reach the fourth round of the WTA tournament in Indian Wells.

Kerber, who will reclaim the world No.1 ranking next week from the absent Serena Williams, reeled off the last three games to take the opener after facing a set point, and was a point from trailing 5-2 in the third before surging to victory.

"It was a tough match and a high-level match from both of us," the German said on court after her two-hour, 33-minute victory.

"Pauline played unbelievably from the first ball, and we both battled until the end."

Other seeds advancing included Venus Williams, Madison Keys and Caroline Wozniacki, while fifth seed Simona Halep and sixth seed Agnieszka Radwanska were ousted by France's Kristina Mladenovic and China's Peng Shuai, respectively.

Williams saved three match points in her opening match but the 12th seed faced no such drama in her 6-4 6-2 victory over Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic.

Next up for the 36-year-old American will be Chinese qualifier Peng, who eliminated Poland's Radwanska 6-4 6-4.