



FOOTBALL FEDERATION
TASMANIA

FROM THE DESK OF THE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

28 JULY, 2010

Oh what a night! Thousands of fans, a band in the stand and a performance on the football field stage by our Tasmanian team that ended in a deserved standing ovation.

Some of my thoughts in a moment, but let's note up front that Graham Arnold, the Central Coast Mariners coach, said the Tasmanian team had put on a tremendous performance of which they could be justifiably proud. He also says just that on the club's official website and other members of the Mariners staff were equally complimentary.

I would like to thank the Mariners for taking the time to journey to Hobart and play a match which meant such a great deal to our football loving public. It will trigger a lasting relationship with the mainland team and no doubt lead to further such games down the road.

I would also like to thank our fans, our clubs, without whose support this game would not have taken place, and all those individuals - you know who you are - who contributed to the unbridled success of this event. The atmosphere in the ground was magic, with so many people lined up around the block that extra gates had to be opened.

Most of all, I want to thank our players, who gave everything they had and more.

For 76 minutes, they not only held the highly rated Mariners at bay, but carved out several excellent scoring opportunities against a formidable defence. In fact, our boys had as many chances to score as Melbourne Victory when they played the Mariners last weekend.

Having watched the Mariners play in that game last Sunday, I asked our team in a 20-minute meeting to follow a game plan based on what I had seen.

The Mariners play with a diamond formation in midfield and encourage their full backs to get forward. I asked our wide players in the front three to drop back and tuck in a little when we lost the ball, essentially going from 1-4-3-3 in possession to 1-4-5-1 when the ball was lost. The idea was to try and prevent the full backs getting forward and or to cut out passes to the sides of the Mariners midfield diamond.

In possession, I asked our players to get the ball to our wide players as often as possible to get around the Mariners narrow diamond midfield. If the way was blocked down one side, I asked our players to quickly switch play to the other side. Going down the middle was always going to be difficult, as the Mariners had a solid advantage in that area.

A big ask. Dead right for a team of amateurs against a team of professionals. Was it always going to work. No. Did our team give it a fair go. You bet. So much so, that our team succeeded on a number of occasions to get down both flanks and create three or four very good chances to score.

Our team also played some good football, keeping the ball on the ground and playing around the back and through the midfield to the flanks. Defensively our team worked its socks off and when the Mariners did penetrate, our Tassie boys threw themselves in front of shots and the two goalkeepers pulled off some fantastic saves.

As the game wore on into the late stages the speed of the Mariners play, aided by a couple of new strikers, was simply too much to cope with.

The Mariners were playing their eighth pre-season game. Tasmania was playing its first together as a team after the briefest of preparations. This was also a team with a 16-year-old, several 17-year-olds and a few more aged 20 and under. A very young team. Some of them were so nervous before the game they were rattling. This was their first audition for the big screen.

From my perspective - and that of everyone I spoke to or heard from after the game - our Tasmania team performed brilliantly under the circumstances.

There were some superb individual performances and three or four players could have swapped shirts with the Mariners and not looked out of place playing for them. Rather than single out individual players for special credit, I want to congratulate them all, because not a single one of them should be doing anything but walking around with their heads held high.

They all did their clubs, families, friends, fans and state proud. Most of all, they did themselves proud.

Well done boys.

Thanks.

Steve Payne
Technical Director
Football Federation Tasmania.