



By George Stavroulakis

SIX BOLTERS FOR CUP OF NATIONS

The Matildas squad for the Cup of Nations (CoN) set to be released on Thursday.



However, with it being a World Cup year, along with injuries to key squad members and players across the W-League putting on some national team worthy performances, there might be a few new or maybe familiar faces around the team.

Here are six players, or what could be considered bolters, that could be named in Ante Milicic's squad.

Eliza Campbell

In a league with some of the top goalkeepers, it can be hard to stand out amongst the crowd but for Campbell, she did just that. She had an unfortunate end to her second ever Matildas cap, sustaining a concussion after colliding with a goalpost which forced her to miss the end of Adelaide United's W-League campaign. She came back though and after making the move to Perth Glory in the off-season, the 23-year-old has been an integral member of the 2018/19 finalist.

In the 14 games Campbell played this season in Glory colours, she has made 48 saves and conceded just 26 (20 in the regular season). She was voted to have the W-League Save of the Week three times. If going off performance is anything, Campbell would be a great addition to the goalkeeper ranks.

Ally Green

She may be young and still learning but left-back Ally Green could be an answer to a current problem in the Matildas defence. The left back role has seen the likes of Gema Simon, Elise Kellond-Knight and Caitlin Foord play in it during the last three outings. Mostly due to an injury to Steph Catley but it would be good to have another specialised left back to gain experience in an important World Cup lead up.

Green had an interrupt 2017/18 W-League season after picking up an injury during the Young Matildas which saw her sidelined for eight weeks before sustaining an ankle injury during a Sydney FC training session. However, the Manly United defender made three starts this W-league season including the Grand Final.

Princess Ibini

Ibini is no stranger to the Matildas set up, in fact, she made her debut in July 2017 as a 17-year-old. More recently, she's also been part of the Young Matildas AFC U19 Women's Championship Qualification campaign, where she scored five goals. Closer to home, there is no doubt she has grown as a player and continued to do so while playing with Sydney FC in the 2018/19 W-League season.

Ibini has made the left wing position her home and contributed four goals on Sydney's way to a record-equalling third Championship. She's already formed partnerships with the likes of Sydney teammates and Matildas Chloe Logarzo and Caitlin Foord. Whether she starts for the Matildas at the CoN or is brought on as a substitute, she would be a valuable asset for Milicic to have in his squad.

Elizabeth Ralston

The 23-year-old has been an assured presence in the Sydney defence for the past six seasons but after the recent season which brought home a Championship, two teammates have said she deserves Matildas selection. Sky Blues captain Teresa Polias and Matilda Alanna Kennedy have both backed Ralston to receive a call-up.

Ralston has been part of Sydney since 2012 and has been part of every finals series plus four grand finals, two of which they have won. She's formed a partnership in the middle of defence with Kennedy and was part of a backline which conceded just 19 goals. Although it won't be easy dispatching the likes of Clare Polkinghorne from the starting centre back role, she could slip into the role off the bench or if an injury occurs (knock on wood though).

Jenna McCormick

The dual code star has had an outstanding season with Brisbane Roar. It's hard to deny the impact she has had alongside captain Polkinghorne in the centre of defence.

Originally meant to be in Queensland for just half-season so she could go back to Adelaide for AFLW pre-season with the Crows, however, plans quickly changed.

Described as a no-nonsense defender, McCormick along with Ralston would add a bit of steel to the defence. It's hard to describe just how important the 24-year-old has been to the Roar in the recent season but one particular statistic stands out.

McCormick has a passing success rate of 82.9 percent, i.e. one of the best in the league. There have been calls from around the league for McCormick to be selected but with a new coach, could selection be up in the air because she plays AFLW? It would be a shame if this is a factor in no selection.

Sarah Willacy

It's pretty hard to turn a blind eye to the season Willacy had with Adelaide United so that is why she is the second goalkeeper in this list. She may only be 159cm tall, and whole 16cm shorter than current number one Lydia Williams but it's not something that is noticeable during a game. In her first season as the first choice keeper she proved her valuable she was to the team, conceding just 19 goals and made a total of 51 saves.

The 23-year-old has been the reserve goalkeeper to former Matildas Melissa Barbieri and Eliza Campbell while at the Reds. She was previously told by a former Adelaide W-League coach that despite being the best keeper in the state, she was too short. However, height doesn't matter if you have the talent. However, it's pretty hard to break into the Matildas goalkeeping ranks with the likes of Campbell and Casey Dumont already having experience as the number three choice.

Although, all Willacy wants is a chance, telling The Women's Game in November 2018 that: "Even to just get to a camp would be a great opportunity to show I'm good enough".