

AUSTRALIA NEWS

Serbia Can Surprise At SA 2010

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Nov 4 2009 23:33

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EXCLUSIVE: Australian-based ex-Red Star player Misha Radovic believes Serbia could be a surprise in South Africa - and he says Australia are better placed for success than in 2006.

Radovic spent the Australian off-season in Serbia gaining his UEFA "A" coaching licence. Some of the mentors included Red Star coaching great Ljupko Petrovic - who won the European Cup with Red Star in 1991 as a coach - and legendary Red Star forward Dusan Savic.

Speaking with many of the best young coaches in Serbia opened Radovic's eyes to the coaching system over there. "It is a tribute to the coaches that numerous top European clubs are vying for their junior talent," he tells [au.fourfourtwo.com](#).

Serbia's youngsters have become hot property across Europe with both Manchester United and Chelsea snapping up their talent. Aside from defender Nemanja Vidic, a regular at Manchester United, Sir Alex has also signed Zoran Tomic and Adem Ljajic from Partizan Belgrade.

Tomic, 22, was part of an eye-catching Serbian side that drew 1-1 with Australia at the last Olympics. And at Chelsea, Nemanja Matic, 20, arrived this year from Slovenian side MFK Kosice joining compatriot Branislav Ivanovic at Stamford Bridge.

The Serbian system is clearly doing something right with Serbia topping their European World Cup qualifying group for South Africa ahead of France.

The experience of Ajax Amsterdam's Marko Pantelic and United's Vidic with the raw talent coming through is great cause for optimism, says Radovic. And it's not just about the Serbian talent on the pitch.

"Now with Radomir Antic, who is ex Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, as coach, with his leadership the Serbian team is very compact and united. He has returned their style of football of traditional short passing style.

"And he's got strong team leaders in Vidic, Ivanovic and Dejan Stankovic, so I think the Serbian side can go very far in the World Cup. Tournament competition is very hard to predict but Serbia has the quality to go through to the last eight."

Serbia and Australia have been ranked close to each other in recent months with both just outside the top ten before falling back to the 20s in October. And Radovic also believes the Aussies are an outside chance.

"In my opinion the current team are mentally stronger than 2006 and this in combination with one World C up under their belt gives them an advantage. Everything is relative, the strength and confidence of the teams drawn in their group is a huge influential factor.

However, the world is changing and the old boy's could no longer monopolise world soccer. We have seen many surprise outcomes. This offers brilliant prospects for any team that is prepared to go 'all out' to win".

Radovic, a friend of Josh Kennedy's club coach Dragan Stojkovic at J-League side Nagoya, coaches juniors at the AC Milan Academy in Sydney. He works alongside another credentialed youth coach in former AC Milan player Andrea Icardi.

After playing for Red Star in the late 70s and having lived in Australia for 20 years after initially attracting interest as a player from Zoran Matic at Adelaide City in the NSL then Bonnyrigg, as a UEFA A coach Radovic sees the Dutch influence on our coaching as positive, but sees limitations.

"The Dutch coaching revolution brings lots of experience and can teach us a lot about great soccer. However in Holland a coach is not rated on the result but on the way the team performs. This is the problem with the Dutch national team, they have some of the best players of the world but there hasn't been a result since the 1988 European cup.

"The Dutch way of coaching is very conservative because the 4-3-3 system. This system uses players on the wing but it doesn't give you an advantage on the midfield, it isn't effective but it delivers great attacking football."

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