



## JUVENTUS ESCAPES SHOCK DEFEAT BY APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS.

### VIAREGGIO 2012

#### Article 7- by John Economos

(Stadio Carlo Bresciani) - Viareggio, Italy.

ITALIAN GIANTS, JUVENTUS, laboriously struggled to a 1-0 win against a very stubborn and defiant APIA Leichhardt Tigers on Wednesday at the Stadio Carlo Bresciani in the second match of Group 4 in the 64th edition of the annual, prestigious, Viareggio Cup Tournament.

It took all the experience of the Juventus captain/striker, Alberto Libertazzi to score in the 83rd minute, the vital, face-saving goal to avoid global humiliation had his 'Black & White' side crashed to a scoreless draw, or worse even, a possible defeat, against the young Australians.

With seven minutes left on the clock, Juventus won a corner on the right which was slung into the box, headed down for the Juventus skipper to score from very close range to get his team 'out of jail'.

Juventus had come perilously close to crashing to a shock defeat at the hands of the highly underrated Australian side from Sydney.



Just two minutes before Juventus scored the heart-breaking winning goal, APIA almost scored their unexpected winner, having kept the star-studded Juventus scoreless for 83 agonising minutes.

Tenacious midfielders, Matthew Napoli and Sammy Salameh, combined to feed lanky substitute striker Blake Armstrong on the left side.

Armstrong quickly cut the ball inside to Chris Denkov who raced into the box on a one-on-one with the Juventus giant 'keeper Constantin Branescu racing out of his six yard box to cruelly block the APIA player's shot at the target.

APIA's defensive tactics had Juventus paralysed for a large portion of the duel.

Marco Baroni, Juventus' coach, who played as a centre back for Napoli during the Maradona era, was totally frustrated as his side with monotonous regularity failed to break down APIA's tight defence.

Defenders Tou-Yeng Yang, Paul Galimi, Brad Bartels and Ali Nasreddine were unyieldingly defiant to the 'Black & White' enemy, especially the intelligent centre-back Galimi who has rapidly developed, and matured, into a star defender, closely followed by the physically strong, lanky fearless Bartels.

So dominant were the APIA defenders, a Serie D Italian coach sitting behind me, commented: “I wish I had Nos 12, 4 and 25”—i.e. Yang, Galimi and Bartels.

Ironically it was APIA that attacked first. Rangy left midfielder, Sammy Salameh, pushed forward firing well on target from wide on the left, only to see the Juventus towering custodian Branesco, save well.

In the 14th minute Juventus’ Schiavone blasted a 15 metre drive that screamed over APIA’s crossbar, followed two minutes later by another shot by Juve’s captain that shaved APIA’s left post.

APIA, (as always), played a 4-2-3-1 system whilst the Italians kicked-off using a 4-3-1-2 formation.

Having kept the giant Juventus scoreless at halftime, the Australians slowly grew in stature.

On the hour mark, almost heart failure struck APIA when Juve’s ace goal scorer and skipper Libbertazzi scored. But he was instantly flagged for off side.

Ten minutes later Juve again was denied a goal, this time by APIA’s captain and goalkeeper, Stefan Giglio who froze the ball right on his goal-line.

For the last 15 minutes the ‘Black & Whites’ frustratingly launched a sustained bombardment of APIA’s lines. But the ‘Maroons’ stood defiant, gallantly marshalled by twin-centre-backs Galimi and Bartels, plus a quick double-save in the 87th minute by goalie Giglio.

APIA’s caretaker coach, Tony Raciti commented after this massive disappointment of narrowly achieving a historic mark in downing Juventus:

“We were seven minutes from making history. This team and the Club would have made

headlines across the planet had we downed the great Juventus.

“Every year for the past 10, we have been gaining huge credibility, with our phenomenal, competitive, unyielding drive and defiance.

“I can remember that just six or seven years back, the constant 5,6 nil thrashings we had suffered. Now we have earned respect, and today we limited the mighty Juventus to a pathetic two shots on target.

“Worse still for Juve, they simply could not penetrate and create chances as they have done so with such great ease in years gone by.

“We as a Club, (and Australian Soccer in general), are now well-organised with great shape, structure, organisation, extremely fit and hearts as big as lions.

“The Australian sporting mentality is obviously inbred in our Youth throughout our nation. It’s these qualities that now support our mind-boggling results to now be successful.

“Remember the Italian teams are losing 4 and 5 nil to their Italian stronger opponents. With all things being equal, an Australian team, currently and in the future, will never lose by such wide margins.

“We are lacking only one thing. That is our mindset regards to training. Our Youth players need to train at least four sessions per week, no more no less.

“It’s only when this happens nationally, (in my humble opinion), then we will start to match the high European standards. But this must happen for 48 weeks of the year. It’s as simple as this,” concluded Raciti.

APIA’s last Group 4 match is on Friday against Danish champions Nordsjaelland who today smashed Citta Di Marino 5 nil.

This Danish team was swamped by Juventus last Monday 6-1.

APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS' lineup: Giglio capt: Yang, Galimi, Bartels, Nasreddine: Raciti, Napoli: Proietto (Dahdah 56th), Denkov, Salameh: Gatt (Armstrong 50th, Ward 89th).

Formation: 4-2-3-1.

Juventus: 4-3-1-2.

Paul Galimi - APIA's Star Central Defender and Man of the Match

