

Frank Arok - Our Beloved Socceroo Coach

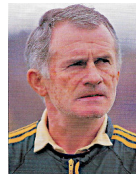
Written by Administrator

Thursday, 14 January 2021 16:48 - Last Updated Thursday, 14 January 2021 17:33

Sydney, Australia

From Football Australia

Football Australia is deeply saddened to have learned of the passing of former Socceroo coach and national football great, Mr Frank Arok AM.



Arok passed away in Serbia on Tuesday, 12 January 2021 due to illness. He was 88.

Arok was born in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1932, and while he was a competent player in his nation of birth, he made the transition to coaching – a profession that he would dedicate much of his life to – in the early 1960s.

In the late 1960s Arok migrated to Australia and commenced his esteemed career in the Australian game with St. George Budapest.

He was awarded National Soccer League (NSL) Coach of the Year honours twice, after taking out the 1982 NSL Playoff Series with a 3-1 win over Sydney City, and guiding a young St George team to the 1983 NSL Championship.

Frank Arok - Our Beloved Socceroo Coach

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 14 January 2021 16:48 - Last Updated Thursday, 14 January 2021 17:33

Earlier in 1983, Arok was appointed as the Head Coach of Australia's men's national football team, the Socceros – a post he would hold for seven years through to early 1990.

During his tenure as Socceros boss, Arok managed Australia in 89 international matches all told, with 48 of these fixtures being 'A' internationals.

Arok's record as National Team coach was strong, with 41 of his 89 fixtures in charge ending in success for Australia, while he also recorded 22 draws.

While Australia didn't reach the FIFA World Cup throughout Arok's tenure as Socceros Head Coach, he did guide the green and gold to several great victories during his time in the role.

On October 8, 1985, Arok's Socceros defeated Israel in World Cup qualifying for Mexico 1986, securing a famous 2-1 victory in front of over 50,000 fans in Tel Aviv, in part thanks to goals from David Mitchell and John Kosmina.

In 1987 and 1988, Arok helped Australia seal just its second appearance in the men's football tournament at the Olympic Games for Seoul 1988. Qualification came after success in a series of home and away fixtures against Taiwan, New Zealand, and Israel.

Ahead of the Olympic Games in 1988, Australia hosted the 'Gold Cup' to recognise Australia's bicentenary. South American heavyweights Brazil and Argentina attended the tournament, as did Saudi Arabia.

Arok's Socceros managed to make it to the Final of the competition on home soil – which they

Frank Arok - Our Beloved Socceroo Coach

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 14 January 2021 16:48 - Last Updated Thursday, 14 January 2021 17:33

lost 2-0 to Brazil at the Sydney Football Stadium, but not before thumping Saudi Arabia 3-0 and Argentina 4-1 along the way. Just shy of 19,000 fans saw Australia defeat Argentina on home soil in July 1988, with Paul Wade, Charlie Yankos (2) and Vlado Bozinoski scoring the goals for the green and gold.

At the Olympics two months later, Australia secured strong results under Arok. On 18 September 1988, Arok led Australia to 1-0 win over Yugoslavia in the team's opening fixture. While Australia lost to Brazil in game two, a 1-0 win over perennial African powerhouse Nigeria on September 22 helped Australia reach the knockout phase. There Australia was eliminated by the eventual Gold Medallists, Soviet Union.

Arok's final fixtures in charge of Australia, before continuing his time in Australian club football, came in January and February of 1990. In a two-match series held in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia played the touring Torpedo Moscow.

On February 2 1990, a brace from current Socceros Head Coach Graham Arnold complemented by a 19th minute strike from Alex Tobin sealed a 3-0 victory for Australia against the visiting Russians in Arok's final match in charge.

After his time with Australia, Arok re-entered the Australian club coaching scene with a variety of famous Australia clubs. He returned to St. George Budapest, coached Marconi to National Soccer League Grand Final success in 1993, mentored South Melbourne between 1994 and 1996 (winning the Dockerty Cup in 1995 with former Socceros manager Ange Postecoglou by his side), and the Gippsland Falcons from 1996 and 1998.

He coached a total of 429 NSL games, the second-most matches of any coach behind Zoran Matic.

Arok also had spells with Port Melbourne, Sydney Olympic, and Perth Glory, before moving to Serbia to retire in 2003.

Arok's contribution to football in Australia was formally recognised by the nation in 1990, when he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Australia Day Honours for "service to soccer, particularly as Australian national coach". Arok was also an inaugural inductee into Football Australia's Hall of Fame in 1999.

Frank Arok - Our Beloved Socceroo Coach

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 14 January 2021 16:48 - Last Updated Thursday, 14 January 2021 17:33

Over the past 24 hours, dozens of current and former players, coaches, administrators, fans and media involved with Australian football have expressed their memories of Arok, demonstrating just how significant his contribution to the game was. Tributes will undoubtedly continue to flow over the coming days and weeks.

Prominent Australian coaches including, but not limited to, Arnold, Postecoglou, Frank Farina, Gary van Egmond, Aurelio Vidmar, John Kosmina, Steve Corica, Ufuk Talay, Jean-Paul de Marigny, and John Hutchinson all played under Arok, undoubtedly influencing their careers in the game.

Arok is survived by his daughter Marijana Novakovic, and granddaughter Gordana, who was named after his late wife.

On behalf of the Australian football family, Football Australia extends its deepest sympathies to the immediate and extended Arok family, and those closest to Frank.

[Frank Arok Gallery](#)