

# No goals ... that's the aim

By Jeff Pistola

A teenage Adelaide Hills soccer player is aiming to continue 'taking all opportunities' presented over the coming season.

Mt Barker resident Dawson Bojanic has been signed by FFSA State Soccer League (1) club Eastern United, and is likely to fill the role of number one senior goal keeper for the 2021 campaign.

After winning last season's State League (2) championship, the Eastern Saints have been promoted into the top-tier ranks, leaving 17-year-old Bojanic as arguably the youngest starting goal custodian in the competition.

A Year 12 student at St Francis de Sales College in Mt Barker, Bojanic was recruited by Athelstone-based Eastern United following some impressive work between the posts during a stint at NPL club Cumberland United.

He played as the Reserves goal keeper and number two gloveman for the Foxes senior side, having returned earlier in 2020 after joining Slovenian Premier League club NK Triglav Kranj as an International Academy Player. The teenager has enjoyed a solid and notable development in soccer after initially playing Australian Rules football in his earlier years – turning out in Hills modified ranks for both Echunga and Mt Barker.

"I guess the background in football did give me a bit of a foundation, particularly in the areas of kicking and catching," assessed Bojanic.

"I didn't mind footy, but I always had a thing for soccer, and with goal keeping and footy being similar, my thing was to be a 'keeper."

"I think being subjected to the physical side of footy was also helpful, given you usually get a bit knocked around as goal keeper."

He ventured into playing soccer for the Adelaide Hills Hawks in 2014-15, winning an Under 13 MVP award

The following two seasons featured Bojanic transferring to Adelaide City, where he was part of a memorable 2017 campaign, winning the State Under 14 championship and also the prestigious Kanga Cup – a national and international club tournament held in Canberra.

In 2018-19 he played with Adelaide Blue Eagles, which included the experience of winning both the 2018 Under 15 State championship and FFSA Cup accolades.

During 2019, the Hills prodigy was invited to spend a week on trial with A-League club Melbourne City, but a highlight which opened his eyes towards the aura of 'the world game' came from a European tour.

Bojanic was selected in the Adelaide Stars Academy to participate in a two-week visit throughout Italy, playing six Academy matches against the likes of Serie A club Torino.

A further highlight of 2019 was being invited to train and trial with renowned Serbian SuperLiga club Red Star Belgrade.

Early last year he was offered a contract to play for NK Triglav Kranj's Under 19 side, but unfortunately the world-wide health pandemic provided a disappointing intervention, shut downs and cancellations forcing the young 'keeper to return home to SA.

That led to him joining Cumberland United for the final half of the 2020 season, making 13 Reserves appearances and sitting on the bench for the senior team.

## European dream

Having been in Slovenia this time last year, Bojanic carries strong aspirations to return to Europe and fulfill a burning dream.

"There's no doubt, being good enough to play at Champions League level is certainly an aim," he noted.

"Having the previous opportunity to become part of the system for just a short time, it just gives an insight into how big the game is over there.

"Until you see it first hand, you have no real idea about it ... the perspective you get is actually a little mind-blowing.

"The game is just huge, the quality of the players and competitions, the standard of the facilities, the training and preparations.

"Nothing compares with it over here, it's a whole new level and experience.

"Currently with Eastern United, we do about three training sessions a week ... over there it was around 12 for the same period.

"Hopefully being able to get back to Europe and further develop myself as a goal keeper is my main ambition.

"I've had some offers to return, but with the restrictions currently in place, I'm keen to get further senior experience here in Adelaide."

## Eastern focus

However, whilst harboring a long-time dream, Bojanic is well focused towards the coming State League campaign with his new club.

"I'm excited to be given a chance with Eastern United and that they have displayed faith in me," he said.

"It's the first time the club has been in State League (1) ranks, so we are really keen to do well.

"Often clubs get promoted and then drop back the following year as the step up can be tough.

"The focus is to definitely to retain our spot and maybe challenge a few of the higher teams.

"Definitely there is the push for the team to do as well as we can.

"That includes me, and hopefully I can get a few clean sheets which will certainly assist the cause.

"People sometimes suggest that goal keepers have a lot of pressure on them, particularly when it comes to penalties.

"However, I reckon there is more pressure on the player taking the penalty ... you'd think they would have a better chance to score than me taking the ball.

"They say the team rides on the 'keeper, but the opposition actually have to beat 10 players before it comes to the case of me being involved.

"Between the posts does give you a good insight down the pitch to how the ball is moving, so I'd like to think I can supply a bit of leadership towards the other players in our defence.

"I guess you could suggest that my goal is to actually stop any goal."

Bojanic's keen love of soccer not only involves him playing, but also acting as a match referee.

He is part of the Adelaide Hills Junior Soccer Association panel and also officiates regularly in FFSA womens and junior games.

"It's something I began four years ago, starting with the younger kids and moving up," he outlined.

"It is a job for me, plus it is helpful for me as a 'keeper as you can be around the ball and see how it moves and how players combine to bring it into the scoring zone.

"I take that on board as far as positioning when I'm playing, while running around also helps with my match fitness.

"I must say, I didn't realise how much advice the man with the whistle does receive, but it's all good fun.

"I hope to continue to juggle playing and officiating as long as I can."

For a young man built around protecting the 'onion bag', there are already signs he may be set to score the odd future personal goal himself.



*Mt Barker teenager Dawson Bojanic is aiming to add to his development as he dons the goal keeper's gloves for Eastern United for its debut 2021 campaign in State Soccer League (1) competition.*



*Dawson Bojanic (right) flies to take a defensive save for Eastern United during a recent trial game. Bojanic has joined the Saints for the upcoming 2021 State League (1) season as he follows a pathway towards possibly returning to European competition – having previously experienced playing and training in Italy and Serbia.*

*Image courtesy Ken Willner from Active Illustrated.*

# Major shots on offer

The final two minor rounds of the Adelaide Hills Petanque Club's super summer series have now been completed.

The top four teams have claimed a berth in this week's finals to decide which team will claim the championship shield.

Round 6 was once again hotly contested by a 20-team field and produced some pretty close results.

'Hills Hoisters' trio Laurie Lever, Tim Shaw and Peter Jensen were well in the mix on the night to finish with two wins and eight shot points to claim sixth place.

Deb Coleman, Joe Wlochowicz and Ashton Claridge of 'Hit or Miss' were just ahead by two points in yet another solid performance to grab fifth.

'Night Riders' team of Lianne Healey, Ralph Foster and Anthony Pietsch also continued their strong form this season to claim fourth.

A few points ahead with a third place finish were 'Paradiso' trio Anne Wlochowicz, Ross Coleman and Helen Scamoni who, despite a few better results in the second half of the season, have failed to recapture the same consistency that took them into the finals last series.

Andrew McKendrick and Dirk Seret had a good night out with 2.5 game wins (incl. a draw) to claim second for 'Floaters'.

Despite the slower start in the first half of the series, 'Growners' were guided into top spot on the night by Brian Tuckfield, Pete Davies and Heather Davies, with three wins and 24 points.

Last Wednesday night's closing Round 7 battles had seven teams vying for the remaining fourth finals spot.

In equal sixth place on the night were the 'IBS' team of Rob Mawson, David Ellery and Ken Hull and 'Hills Hoisters' – each finishing with two wins and a point.

Two points further ahead, Quentin Jones, Mike Read and Guerino Scamoni firmed 'Steelers' spot in the finals by finishing fifth.

'Growners' finished the night in equal third place with 'Night Riders', both with a respectable two victories and 15 points.

This result set the standings of the top four teams to compete in the finals, as it cemented fourth spot for the resurgent 'Growners' and the minor premiership for 'Night Riders'.

Christine Mullane, Brenda Claridge and Paul Mullane had another good night out to claim second for 'M&Ms' with a tally of 2.5 wins and 12 points, which advanced them six places on the championship ladder to finish the minor rounds strongly in sixth.

Equally impressive were the round's top placed team of 'Billy & the Kids' who were the only team to win all three games on the night.

Bill and James Warburton and Tom Jarvis-Lemm's championship standing increased seven places to finish seventh overall.

The four finalist teams will be 'Night Riders', 'Hit or Miss', 'Steelers' and 'Growners', while the remainder of the teams compete together for the minor placings bragging rights.

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