



Australia's top striker Mark Viduka (R) leads his teammates at a training session in Hanoi on Friday. Australia take on defending champions Japan in quarterfinal of the Asian Cup in Hanoi today.

## All eyes on Aussie-Japan clash

AFP, Hanoi

Japan coach Ivica Osim rates the Asian Cup quarterfinal clash of the titans with Australia as Saturday as the toughest challenge in his time with the Blue Samurai. But the Bosnian insists revenge for their humiliating World Cup defeat to the Socceroos is not an issue, a sentiment echoed by Australian counterpart Graham Arnold who contends much has changed since last year in Kaiserslautern. "I consider it the toughest match I have faced as Japan coach and consider Australia, from the objective viewpoint I have about this Asian Cup, the toughest opponents we could possibly meet," said Osim. "As Brazil won the Copa America title after losing their opening game, Australia may possibly do the same." "They are on course to get better as a whole and formidable as the opponents. On the other hand, we have not yet experienced a poorly played game."

Australia beat Japan 3-1 in their World Cup opener in Germany with all their goals coming in the last eight minutes. The Asian champions never recovered and crashed out at the group stage. But Osim insists no-one is dwelling on the past. "It is shocking if you still feel the shock after one year," he said. "The better team won that match. Japan lacked the right information on Australia. If they are favourites here this year, it means they were not an easy side to beat last year."

Arnold would only say that everyone is fit and the mood in the camp is buoyant after their 4-0 thrashing of Thailand in Bangkok last Monday. "In training, we've played enormously well in the last few days. The players are in an extremely good mood," he said. "Everyone is fit (except for the suspension of Luke Wilkshire). We have a special team spirit. We're looking forward to being very successful tomorrow."

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crunch match, and was keeping his cards close to his chest Friday. All three players were outstanding in the World Cup game against Japan but Kewell and Cahill have been more effective here as substitutes, while Neill is available after serving a one-match ban for his red card against Iraq.

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