

VareseNews

Birighitti: “I want to grow with Varese, so I can get back on the Australian team”

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The young goalkeeper of Italian origin has trained under the guidance of Bettinelli. His father is originally from Bergamo, his mother, from Sicily, and he has already worn the Australia jersey.

However, he explained, “To get back in the Socceroos, I have to do well in Europe.” Mark Birighitti landed in the country of his dreams and of his origins, and immediately put his gloves on for the first training session with his new teammates. **Mark, the Australian goalkeeper who has an Italian passport**, joined Varese this morning (Wednesday 28 January) to work under the orders of Stefano Bettinelli and all the staff of the red and whites, at the **Bosto sports centre**, in Capolago, beside the other goalkeepers on the team, Perucchini and La Gorga.

Birighitti, 23, who has already played for the Australian national team, immediately responded to the call from Varese, which was passed on to him by his manager, to find his way in Old World football. **“I’ve always followed Italy and its championship, I’ve supported Juventus since I was a boy**, and my absolute model and idol could be none other than **Gigi Buffon**,” Mark said, in good Italian, at the end of the training session.

He explained that the Birighittis have always been football fans. “It was my grandparents who emigrated to Australia, and they still live there; **my paternal grandparents come from Bergamo, and my maternal grandparents are Sicilian**. My grandfather played football, he passed on his passion to my **dad, who was a goalkeeper at a local level**, and then he took me to the pitch when I was a boy. And now, here I am.”

However, Birighitti had still not set foot in Italy. “I did a few trials in Europe: three years ago **in Holland and two years ago in Germany**, but there still hadn’t been any negotiations with any Italian teams. Then, Varese came along and I immediately seized the opportunity; **I found out as much as I could on the Internet, about the team, the players, and the town**, which I liked immediately. I also found out that, near here (in Gavirate, ed.), there’s our Ministry of Sport, which I didn’t know existed, even though I attended the AIS (Australian Institute of Sport) back home. Of course, I also had a look at the results table, which isn’t simple, but **there are still a lot of matches to go**, and there’s time to climb back up. I hope to help with this.”

When asked to describe how he plays in goal, Mark explained, “I consider myself an “aggressive” goalkeeper, reasonably capable with my feet and able in “one on one” situations against forwards. In general, I also look to come out on high kicks. Having said this, I’m here, in Varese, to try to play, even though I know I’m competing with two good goalkeepers, who I started working with today. **Having the capable coach Stefano Ciucci nearby** will raise my game.”

Birighitti has already **officially worn the Australian colours** (against China), he was called for the qualifiers of the Brazilian World Cup, but not for the Asian Cup, which has been going on over the last few weeks. **This is also why he decided to fly to Europe**. “There are currently several Australian goalkeepers playing here, including those now on the National team. **I understand that if I want to return, I have to grow here**, and this is another reason why I was pleased to accept the call from Varese.”

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