



HANGZHOU GREENTOWN 2016-2017: THE STORY SO FAR



“绿城”之战

By William Gray



Those following football may well be aware that the closed season has been an eventful one in terms of transfer dealings on the part of Chinese clubs. It has been a steady trend over the last few years to see big names arrive in China and this phenomenon has recently gone into overdrive with quality players such as Gervinho, Ramirez, Martinez and Teixeira entering the fray. For those based in China who dig their sports this is a really exciting development as the growing influx of new foreign talent has surely ignited a league which has always before lacked the allure of its European counterparts.

That aside, as an Everton and Hangzhou Greentown fan the footy-related excitement of the weeks leading up to the new season was tinged with disappointment. First of all, I was a little narked to hear Tim Cahill had left Shanghai Shenhua. He's a bit of a cult

hero for us Evertonians, winning many plaudits for his efforts during his lengthy stint at the Merseyside club and I felt I should have done more to see him play. Secondly, whilst I've been glad to see so many hotly tipped acquisitions joining the Chinese domestic league, it never seemed to be Hangzhou Greentown who was signing any of these well known players. So imagine my joy when I read that Cahill had joined...wait for it...Greentown!

OK, it's hardly signing Messi at the peak of his powers but it seems Tim (it's OK if I call you Tim isn't it Tim?) has injected some much needed grit, experience, guile, and leadership into the Hangzhou setup, and will surely bag a few cheeky goals in the process (to date it's just the one goal - a penalty on his debut which I was buzzing to witness as a spectator at the ground). For those of you who see Cahill as gutsy rather than glamorous, I'd say he brings both to the table - just check out his screamer against Holland

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in the 2014 World Cup, surely one of the best efforts of the tournament.

If Cahill manages to inspire Greentown to a successful season on the pitch then off the pitch it will be new manager Hong Myung-bo that takes a large portion of the credit and, fingers crossed, proves even more of an important signing. Hong is both a former player for and manager of South Korea, and considered by many as one of the best Asian footballers of all time, playing in four consecutive World Cups. Can he also become one of the best managers? Only time will tell but under his guidance South Korea won bronze at the 2012 Olympics, their first ever medal in Olympic football. Not too shabby. Are you now suitably excited about how Cahill is faring lining up next to fellow Socceroo Spiranovic, plucky South Korean right-back Beom-Seok - oh, and Ivorian target man Angan? Well perhaps it's time to manage your expectations

then because, so far, it's been a mixed bag performance wise.

The opening game at home against Changchun Yatai fulfilled the early promise. Hangzhou went two goals up and coasted to victory, consolation goal notwithstanding. And there was of course that Cahill debut goal from the penalty spot (2-1). Next the team lost away to Shijiazhuang Everbright (1-0) but put in a good shift so nothing to be too despondent about there. The competent home form continued with another two goals put away against Shandong Luneng. Good to see Luo Jing influencing the game with a goal and an assist, the latter putting Angan on the score sheet meaning he is off and running early in the season (2-0). However the unlucky away run continued with another solitary goal putting our noble greens to the sword once more, this time losing to Tianjin Teda (1-0). The run of home wins

sadly came to an end with the second half crumbling against Beijing Guoan BUT Beijing are traditionally one of the big hitters in the domestic league and will surely be challenging for honours come the end of the season. Losing to Beijing is nothing to be ashamed about.

At the time of writing, Hangzhou are awaiting the visit of Chongqing Lifan. With both teams level on points, the outcome could tell us a bit more about the direction Hangzhou Greentown are heading in this season. So far though I'd assert the new manager has instilled some confidence, and got the defence looking more compact. The signing of Cahill was a masterstroke, and whilst a team is only losing by one goal away and winning most of their home fixtures, then there are reasons to be hopeful. Get down to Huanglong and support our team I say. COYG!ww