

TIM CAHILL

How was it different to playing in the Premiership?

You're punished every time you make a mistake. You saw when we played Brazil, there wasn't much in the game apart from two great finishes. Ronaldo and Ronaldinho were brilliant and the finishing was exquisite. Japan are very technical, great footballers. If we had had that bit of extra firepower against Italy with 10 men, we could have gone a hell of a long way, because we would have been playing Ukraine after that. **You and John Aloisi started as subs against Japan. Was that a piece of Guus genius?**

I'll leave that to everyone's imagination. I was so happy to be a part of it, to come on and get my chance, and I scored two wonderful goals. But just being a part of this squad is priceless.

How did those last seven or eight minutes feel?

Great relief. We'd played really well but just hadn't stuck the ball in the net. Coming off the bench, our legs were fresh and I was ever so confident. I was sat next to Archie Thompson and the rest, and I was saying, "If you get on there just score, you know, shoot, if you get your chance. I still speak with John Aloisi, and deep deep down we knew something good was going to happen. And it happened.

Were you aware what a huge impact it had in Australia?

Not really. We were in camp, so we were like robots. After the match I went back and had ice baths – we had to recover and get ready to train the next day, and the next game. Guus never really gave us any time to celebrate – we were straight back into it. It was obviously something really special but we didn't feel the impact until after the tournament.

How connected to the outside world are you during a big tournament?

We were very isolated. We saw a few papers, but it was much better for us. We were away from the families and the fans, but I'm not complaining – [that approach] paid off and helped put us on the map. **There was still a tournament to be played at that point...**

Most definitely. I had pains in my knee and Harry (Kewell) was struggling with injury, so we were straight away getting treatment.

Action hero: Cahill in the thick of things for Everton; meeting fans post-World Cup (below).

It was all about preparation and we did as much as we could for it.

For the Uruguay qualifier, how far down the penalty list were you?

During that game, 15 minutes prior to the penalties, I had a slight adductor problem and couldn't really kick the ball with my right foot. I got

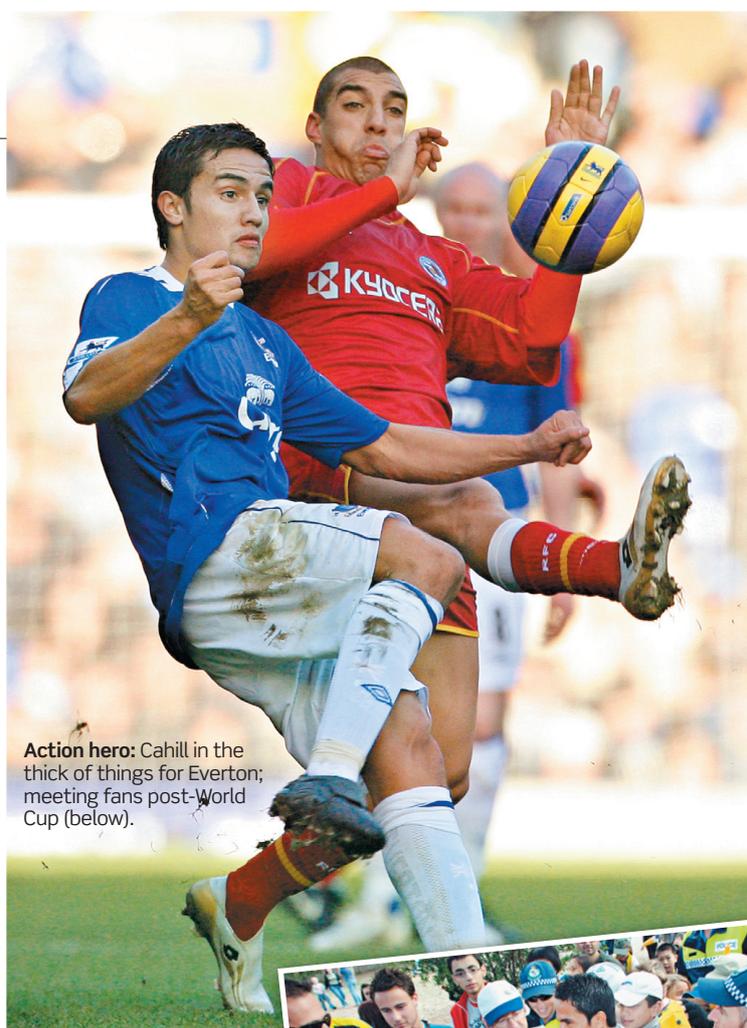
pushed to the right wing and Jason (Cullina) got pushed in. We were trying to shore it up, either to nick a goal or to stop the goal. I think it was Vinnie Grella at number five or six and then me. I was definitely a bit further down the line. I'm not

a normal penalty taker, it was a big occasion and the lads who took the penalties were very confident.

Were you nervous?

I'm always nervous. There's always a nervous energy. Any athlete will tell you. For me, it's part of the buzz of being a footballer. If there was no buzz you wouldn't play. You get nervous before every game, but once you're on there you're a professional and you get through it. We've been in this game too long to choke.

"I was saying, 'Just score, shoot if you get your chance.'"



house by yourself, so I try to share a lot of it with my family. And I've got two beautiful boys who keep me busy. If I'm walking down the street I'll always sign autographs, and I'll always have time for anyone because Australian people are the nicest people in the world.

Bet you sign a few more autographs than you used to, though.

Yeah, but this is why you play the game, to give it more recognition, to try to make it bigger in Australia. You see how the Ashes have been going. I was talking to Brett Lee after the World Cup and he's a great ambassador for his sport and Australian sport in general.

You seem to deal with pressure well.

When you've got the right people around you, your family and everyone, it's quite simple – because if things don't work, you've got a good base to fall back on. They're always picking me up and telling me to

try again. Luckily, I haven't really been in a situation where things have failed; it's always had a great ending for me. There aren't many Australian stars who really outclass themselves or who don't have time for people. Because it's a lonely, lonely place by yourself. **Everton bought**

you with some of the

money made from the sale of Wayne Rooney. Did the hype affect you?

There was a bit of pressure because here was some Australian kid come in from Millwall; they'd sold Rooney for [\$57] million and bought me for [\$3.75] million. The fans are obviously gutted because they've lost one of their biggest players. They knew who I was but I was unproven. In a way it was good for me because I could go in as a dark horse, spread my wings and do my stuff. I scored 13 goals and we got Everton in the Champions League. We didn't spend a lot of money but we had heart and spirit, and a good group of boys who played for each other.

How scary was it playing for Millwall? Did you see any terrible crowd violence?

Put it this way: I was always playing for Millwall, so I was all right. They were very passionate supporters, but there's always a minority who spoil it for everyone.

Do you keep track of the A-League?

Yeah, I'm mates with Archie Thompson, and Melbourne are