

THE AUSTRALIAN

Next big thing Kwabena gets urge to wander

RAY GATT THE AUSTRALIAN JUNE 26, 2012 12:00AM

AS he surveyed the surrounds from the centre of Parramatta Stadium, eyes wide open, smiling broadly and with a battalion of television cameras trained on him, Kwabena Appiah-Kubi could barely believe what was happening.

Unveiled minutes earlier as one of three official signings for new A-League club Western Sydney Wanderers, the New Zealand-born, 20-year-old of Ghanaian parents was awestruck as he tried to comprehend the magnitude of the occasion.

"It's unbelievable . . . I don't know really how to react," Appiah-Kubi said as the media lined up to talk to the young man some in the game believe could be the "next big thing" in Australian soccer.

"I am very thrilled. It is a privilege to be part of the inaugural squad and I can't wait for training.

"It has been my dream to play in the A-League. I have been working for that for ages and now that it is close I just can't wait."

Appiah-Kubi says he is a western suburbs boy through and through, living in Parramatta and educated at Parramatta Marist Brothers while forging a football career with Central Coast, where he played in the youth league last season.

"I played every game for the Mariners and we won the title, so that was a great experience," he added. "But I jumped at the chance to join when (Wanderers coach) Tony Popovic came knocking on my door."

Popovic said he was excited by the prospects of the left-sided attacker, who has skill, blistering speed and a great eye for goal.

"I've watched him in the state league and he has been doing very well," Popovic said.

"He could turn out a really good story. He has got the chance now to go from part-time footballer to full-time.

"It's up to him to take the opportunity."

Appiah-Kubi is part of the booming growth in African immigration that has also seen a number of gifted athletes breaking into various sporting codes in Australia.

And there is more to come in soccer, according to Gode Migerano, a Ghanaian who works with refugees and the disadvantaged.