

AROUND THE GROUNDS

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE ROUND 14 – PREVIEW

Joseph Carlucci

At top of the table clash at Belmore Sports Ground on Saturday afternoon kick-starts Round 14 of the NSW Premier League as Sydney Olympic locks horns with Sutherland Sharks in what is expected to be an epic battle.

Placed first and second respectively on the League ladder, both sides have much to play for as a win for the Blues will open up a seven-point lead over the Sharks, meanwhile victory for Sutherland will close the Blues lead at the top to only one-point.

With much at stake for both camps, the Blues hold home ground advantage with the picturesque playing surface at Belmore Sports Ground very suited to the passing game instilled by coach Peter Tsekenis.

Sydney Olympic have a busy week with Waratah Cup action prior to the blockbuster with Sutherland, as the side will need to be switched on for the full 90' minutes on Saturday. A rather lackluster second period against Blacktown City FC last weekend almost cost the Blues maximum points, and Chris Triantis and Robbie Mileski will need to be on their games to ensure the Sharks rearguard have a busy afternoon.

The Sharks too suffered late on against Manly United FC last weekend, though Robbie Stanton's men were able to grind out a 3-1 win. Once again, Sam Awad and Matt Bailey's goals will be priceless for the Sharks, equally important will be the influence of Nick Stavroulakis in the midfield holding role along with Panni Nikas' creativity behind the strikers. In a potential dress rehearsal for this season's grand final, no holds barred in Belmore on Saturday.

Over at Bonnyrigg Sports Club, the White Eagles meet stern rivals Bankstown City in another important encounter for both clubs. Bonnyrigg has shown supporters and followers of the competition that it is back for a serious tilt at winning the title this season with some scintillating performances over the past month. The side struggled for a large part of the first-half of the season though coach Brian Brown has managed to instill the confidence that was missing amongst his troops earlier on in the campaign. Alex Canak has shown his worth with some stellar performances, meanwhile the additions to the playing roster of Blake Powell, David



the Wolves will need goals to close out matches. Sasho Petrovski will be back for selection as his understanding alongside Mark Piccolini has proven a positive outlet for the Wolves thus far.

As for the Tigers, much attention will surround new signing Adam D'Apuzzo who will certainly add some good experience to assist with the Tigers' run towards the end of the season. With more also expected of the side's wiser heads, three points will go a long way in kick-starting the Tigers' 2011 campaign.

Blacktown City FC return to Lily Homes to face Parramatta FC on Sunday. Blacktown City have grown as the season has progressed, and the side has found the wins to setup a spot amongst the League's Top-Five. Unfortunately for the reigning Champions, last weekend's nail biting defeat at the hands of Sydney Olympic has slowed down the run of the Champions though expectation around the club is for a win against Parramatta FC.

The new boys to the Premier League for 2011 have struggled in terms of results this season, and the task at hand for Manny Spanoudakis who takes over at the club for his first League match this weekend is definitely a difficult one against Blacktown City FC. Spanoudakis will be looking to his experienced players to lead the side away from bottom spot on the ladder as we inch closer to the end of the regular season.

In the final match of the Round, Manly United FC and Marconi Stallions meet at Cromer Park. Both sides are coming off losses in Round 13, albeit in matches where they did certainly pressure front runners Sutherland Sharks and Sydney United respectively.

The home side will need to make the most of the chances created after spurning a number of goal scoring attempts at Seymour Shaw last weekend, meanwhile the Stallions too were culprits in the squandering goal scoring chances.

Five points separate the two sides on the ladder, and a Marconi win on Sunday will keep the Stallions in the mix for finals football. Manly's run home is a little more difficult, though a win on Sunday will keep Craig Midgley's side alive and kicking with a decent chance to push for finals football.

Round 14

TIME	HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	VENUE
5:00 PM Sat 25/Jun	Sydney Olympic	vs Sutherland Sharks	Belmore Sports Ground
7:00 PM Sat 25/Jun	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	vs Bankstown City	Bonnyrigg Sports Club
7:00 PM Sat 25/Jun	Rockdale City Suns	vs Sydney United	Ilinden Sports Centre
3:00 PM Sun 26/Jun	South Coast Wolves	vs APIA Leichhardt Tigers	John Crehan Park
3:00 PM Sun 26/Jun	Blacktown City FC	vs Parramatta FC	Lily Homes
4:00 PM Sun 26/Jun	Manly United FC	vs Marconi Stallions	Cromer Park

Vrankovic and Nathan Elasi have now certainly proven how important these youngsters will be in the White Eagles' charge towards the playoffs.

Despite Bankstown City's stop-start campaign to-date, any clash against Bonnyrigg White Eagles will bring the Lions up to the plate to fight for the win. Added bonus for the Lions is the side's important defeat of Rockdale City Suns last weekend, sure to add much confidence to the squad in anticipation of facing Bonnyrigg. New additions to the Lions' playing roster Bilal Al Najjarine and Sean Mitchell will no doubt assist Blagoja Kuleski's men in pressing for a potential finals berth this season, meanwhile the exceptional goalkeeping pro-wess of veteran Zlatko Joseski will again prove vital to the Lions' chances – Joseski was phenomenal against Rockdale City, producing some top class saves – including a fine penalty save to deny Peter Apolevski from the spot.

A win for Bonnyrigg will send

the reigning Premiers into serious contention for a top-two finish, meanwhile a Lions three pointer will keep the Jenson Park side in the hunt for finals football.

At Ilinden Sports Centre, Rockdale City Suns face Sydney United on Saturday evening with points a must for both sides for very different reasons. Much like Bonnyrigg, a win for the Reds will keep the side in contention for the top two spots on the ladder, meanwhile Rockdale City's chances of sneaking into contention for finals football go on the line as the teams above them have started to make a break.

Lee Sterrey's men were left to rue a number of missed chances in the last-ditch loss at Bankstown City last weekend, something the side can no longer afford in the run home this season. The clash against Sydney United will be a difficult one without captain Peter Apolevski who is suspended, meanwhile the side will need to completely block out the memo-

ries of the earlier encounter against the Reds this season, won by Sydney United 6-1.

Jean-Paul De Marigny's men returned to the winner's list last weekend with a pleasing defeat of neighbours, Marconi Stallions. More pleasing for De Marigny is the return to fitness of a number of his players, including the likes of Elsid Barkhousir and Ante Tomic who have both missed a bit of football over the past month.

On Sunday afternoon at John Crehan Park, South Coast Wolves will take the field against A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers in another defining match for both these sides. Three points is a must for both camps who are aiming to move away from the bottom of the League ladder and potentially make a challenge for finals football.

The Wolves will be confident of success, playing at home against a Tigers side that has struggled to find their groove this season, though despite some strong showings in recent weeks,