

## Around the Grounds NSW Premier League Round 17 Preview

**M**anly United FC and Parramatta FC kick-start Round 17 proceedings at Cromer Park on Saturday evening in what promises to be an entertaining battle between two sides vying for very different objectives. The Northern Beaches side has been in exceptional form over the past month, and points are necessary for Marc Richards & Co. to keep the pressure on the teams above them for a top five berth. The side has grown from strength-to-strength with coach Craig Midgley unleashing some fine talent on the park from Jimmy Oates on the right-flank to Scott Balderson up front. The Waratah Cup triumph will spur the side on for this fixture, in what is a must win match for Manly United in the run home to the conclusion of the regular season. Parramatta FC holds the wood over Manly United FC after disposing of the Waratah Cup winner in the reverse fixture earlier in the season. Coach Manny Spanoudakis has made a very positive influence at the club since his arrival, though more wins will be needed to lift the side off the foot of the table. Spanoudakis will be without Kutaiba Elrich this weekend due to suspension, though Chris Camilleri's return from injury is a huge plus – the midfielder has been adding minutes to his game time since the injury layoff, and may well be in contention for a starting spot on Saturday. Over at Ilinden Sports Centre, Rockdale City Suns will be out for revenge when Bonnyrigg White Eagles visit. The Suns led Bonnyrigg in the reverse fixture this season, though conceded goals late on to leave Bonnyrigg Sports Centre with nothing to show following a stellar performance. Rockdale City too has enjoyed an improvement in results since Wally Savor took over the coaching reins, with the side still a shot for finals football. Home ground advantage will be a big benefit for the side, though Bonnyrigg will be no push over on Saturday. Brian Brown's men struggled early against Marconi Stallions last weekend, though quickly



turned things around following Giosue Sama's opening goal for the Stallions. Striker Brad Boardman was not at one hundred percent last weekend due to the flu, though the burly striker was clinical coming off the bench. New signing Brendan Gan has also been in great touch since joining the club – the attacking midfielder scored his first goal last weekend, and will play a massive part in the White Eagles' run home this season. On Sunday afternoon, League leader Sydney Olympic should – at least on paper – have a straight forward outing against A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers if recent results are anything to go by. The Tigers have struggled for the past two months now, though signs are positive for a side that has shown they can play a very neat passing game. Playmakers Nicola Rizzo and Franco Parisi have both shown their ability in recent weeks – meanwhile Robbie Younis has also continued his return to full fitness with some positive displays. The Tigers will need to find some consistency though, against Sydney Olympic if they are to take anything from Belmore on Sunday. The side was culprit of poor concentration when they

conceded two goals in 2' first-half minutes against Sutherland Sharks last weekend – even luckier not to concede an additional two goals in the 5' minutes that followed. With a more compact defensive unit over the 90' minutes, the side can certainly match it with the Blues. Sydney Olympic will certainly enter this clash, well aware that the Tigers' poor run of luck can turn at any moment. The Blues were relentless against Manly United FC last weekend, pulling their sleeves up and working hard for their win against bottom-placed Parramatta FC. Despite the departure of Daniel Severino, coach Peter Tsekenis will be very excited about the fine form of goalscorers Robbie Mileski and David Gullo last weekend – a very important duo in the side's bid for silverware this season. Bankstown City faces a real moment of truth when Sutherland Sharks visit Jensen Park on Sunday, the Lions needing to bounce back from the disastrous loss at Blacktown City last weekend. A number of absentees did the side no favours last weekend, though with the finals series seeming less and less likely, it is make or break for the Lions this weekend.

The Sharks were exceptional against A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt last weekend and the side will be out to close the gap on Sydney Olympic. Coach Robbie Stanton defined his side's most recent showing as the best this season, and with a Panni Nikas and Nick Stavroulakis combination working wonders in mid-field, the Lions task for victory will be incredibly difficult. Marconi Stallions too face a delicate match against South Coast Wolves with the side's chances of finals football taking a huge blow following the loss at Bonnyrigg last weekend. The Stallions have proven their ability to mix it with the best in the competition this season, though the side has coughed up leads in each of their last two matches. South Coast Wolves' run of results have not been impressive, though Trevor Morgan's side has put together some good passages of play in all matches this season. Sash Petrovski and Mark Picciolini will be handed the task of finding the goals at Marconi Stadium on Sunday, in the hope of moving away from the bottom places on the League ladder before the season's end. In arguably the match of the round, second meets fifth as Sydney United play host to Blacktown City FC. The Reds have been difficult to break down at home this season, and Blacktown City will find a much tougher obstacle ahead of them than last weekend's showdown against Bankstown City.

Luke Roodenburg's sensational hat-trick was the perfect 'captain's performance', and the Blacktown City veteran will be looking for more goals against the Reds. Jean-Paul De Marigny will hope his in-form striker Elsid Barkhousir continues with his rich goalscoring form, meanwhile the fine performances of Steve Hayes out of midfield, alongside Ufuk Talay, remain key for the Reds' charge for top spot. Sydney United Sports Centre will be the place to be on Sunday in a fixture that never fails to deliver between these two sides.

*By Joseph Carlucci*

## Qantas Young Socceroos using sports science to prepare for FIFA U-20 World Cup

**T**he Qantas Young Socceroos are using the latest in sports science as they prepare for the upcoming FIFA U-20 World Cup in Colombia. With all three Group C matches to be played at 2,150m above sea level in the Colombian City of Manizales, the first decision Qantas Young Socceroos Head Coach Jan Versleijen made when planning the campaign was to have a 10-day pre-tournament altitude training camp in Denver, Colorado. Denver is situated at 1,600m above sea level and is high enough to let the players bodies adjust to the demands of playing at altitude with temperatures hovering around 34°C and 20-30% humidity. Versleijen, who is also in charge of the men's football program at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in Canberra, consulted with some of Australia's top sports scientists at the AIS Sports Physiology Department on how to best prepare his team for the challenge of competing at altitude. The AIS Sports Physiology Department has over 20 years of experience of using altitude to prepare athletes for competition and is considered the world leader in the area. "To compete at the World Cup we have to conquer all the conditions which includes the altitude, time difference, temperature and the movement of the ball," said Versleijen after training on the second day of the

camp. "We know that the training loads placed on the players are different at altitude compared to sea level. "The science is used to confirm and check the performance of the players during training. "If you don't monitor the loads and stresses on the players during this phase of our preparations they will break down and will not be at their peak for the tournament. "Our training sessions will be gradually built up from 65 minutes to 90 minutes as the players acclimatise to the conditions. "It must also be considered that the match ball moves differently at altitude and our training drills have been modified to maximise ball interaction for the players. "By combining all this knowledge and strategies we will be fully prepared for the start of the tournament," concluded Versleijen. AIS Sports Physiologist Laura Garvican and Victorian University of Technology Exercise Science Honours Student Kristal Hammond have also travelled with the Qantas Young Socceroos to Denver to assist with the team's preparations. Garvican and Hammond will monitor the heart-rate and GPS positioning of each of the players during the training sessions to provide valuable feedback to the coaching staff on individual performance. The data collected at each training session is discussed daily with the coaches, and modifications to fu-

ture training sessions are made where necessary. Garvican, who specialises in preparing elite athletes for extreme environments, believes that there is much to be gained from using the latest in sports science to prepare the Qantas Young Socceroos for the FIFA U-20 World Cup. "Elite endurance athletes have used altitude training for many years as a means to improve their performance at sea level", said Garvican. "The use of altitude in team sports has not been explored in depth, but many team sports are now facing the challenges of altitude due to the location of major sporting events. "Faced with the challenge of competing at the U-20 World Cup at altitudes greater than 2000m, the Young Socceroos are drawing on the experience that Australian sports scientists have gained from endurance athletes, in order to achieve the best possible preparation. "The combination of the heat and altitude in Denver provides potential benefits from two angles – the altitude provides a stimulus to increase red blood cell production, whilst the primary adaptation to heat stress results in an increase in plasma volume. In combination, these adaptations result in a larger blood volume, allowing the players to work harder, for longer," concluded Garvican. Qantas Young Socceroos team medical officer, Dr

Trevor Law, is responsible for the overall wellbeing of the team and monitors the player's sleep levels and hydration on a daily basis to ensure that they are adequately compensating for the loss of electrolytes that they experience through training. "The biggest issue of competing at altitude is getting the body accustomed to the physiological changes which includes headaches, sleep disturbance and fluid loss, said Dr Law. "To overcome the effects of altitude stress we are monitoring their hydration levels, their sleeping patterns and general nutritional levels. "One strategy to assist with the adjustment to the time zone differences was that the players were put onto the desired time zone from the time we left Sydney and once we arrived avoided direct daylight in the mornings, meaning that training was mainly held in the afternoons for the first few days. "Each player adapts to the change in altitude differently, but within a few days they will normalize and we believe that by the time we arrive in Colombia the altitude will not be a significant issue", concluded Dr Law. In total the Qantas Young Socceroos will spend 10 days in Denver before travelling to Colombia on the 26th July to complete their preparations before their opening match of the FIFA U-20 World Cup against Ecuador on the 31st July.