

Around the Grounds

NSW Premier League Round 21 Preview

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Bonnyrigg White Eagles and Sutherland Sharks meet in the only Saturday evening fixture this weekend as we edge closer to the end of the regular season.

The White Eagles need points at home as an in form Sharks squad visits Bonnyrigg Sports Club. With a number of former Sharks players vesting the colours of Bonnyrigg – coaching duo Brian Brown and Cliff Pointer included – former sentiments will be left aside as last season's grand-finalists have slipped down to fifth-place on the League ladder. Defensively Bonnyrigg has been sound over the second-half of the season, though results over the past three weeks have not been pleasing for the club. Former Sharks defender Michael Robinson will look to tighten the defence with his experience, meanwhile Blake Powell and Brad Boardman (both former Sharks players) will look to get the business done in the front-third. Sutherland's form has been impressive, though the side does need to lift their conversion rate in front of goal. George Souris and Hayden Morton have established themselves as an unyielding central defensive pairing, as has the tandem in midfield with Nick Stavroulakis and Panni Nikas. In the front-third, Sam Awad and Matt Bailey will be needed to combined with the likes of Nikas and Jim Bakis who has made a great return from injury, if the side is to return to Seymour Shaw with the points this weekend. On Sunday, Sydney Olympic will not be taking anything for granted as Rockdale City Suns visit Belmore Sports Ground. The Blues have lost their last two matches at home, significantly loosening the side's previously firm grip on top-spot.



In the hot seat... Bankstown City FC's new coaching staff of former player George Nohra along with John Mavridis and Club President John Veljanovski hope that the new coaching staff can push Bankstown to more positive results for the remainder of the 2011 NSW Premier League season

Peter Tsekenis will be without captain Richard Luksic for the clash, though there is certainly enough cover amongst the playing squad to get the job done on Sunday. Suns coach Wally Savor will be out to add further woe to the Blues, though he will need his side to perform as strongly as they did in the second-half at Sutherland last weekend. The Suns closed strongly against the Sharks – creating chances to win the match late on – a pleasing sign considering the large number of absentees at the club at present. Even with the Suns out of the running for a finals place, the Blues will be made to work overtime on Sunday to get a result. At Jensen Park, Bankstown City coaching duo Blagojce Pilovski and George Nohra will be looking to charge their troops for a win when Manly United FC visits on Sunday. The Lions are in a precarious position at the moment with

the side figuring at the bottom end of the Club Championship. Former Lions' midfielder Nohra is adamant his side can rally to finish the season strongly, though the club will require each of their teams across the board to perform well. Manly United's finals ambitions have all but faded following recent losses against A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers and South Coast Wolves. Craig Midgley's men have had a brilliant season with the Cup victory, and despite falling out of contention for finals football, will not be handing out any favours to the Lions on Sunday. Blacktown City FC and South Coast Wolves meet at Lily Homes Stadium in what promises to be a very entertaining matchup. Both sides have hit a good run of form in recent weeks, with neither side afraid to play attacking football. The reigning champions scored an exceptional away win against Bonnyrigg

last weekend, with the side now only five points behind leaders, Sydney Olympic. Mark Crittenden has benefited from the experience offered from his 'older heads' in the group, namely Luke Roodenburg and Milorad Simonovic, who have both figured amongst the goals this season. South Coast Wolves have shown their ability in 2011 with Trevor Morgan getting some good value out of his troops. A relatively young squad with some valuable experience in the form of Sasho Petrovski, Dave Abel and Brody Crane, the side has not been afraid to play attacking football be it at home or away. With three matches remaining in the competition, a win for the Wolves will send the side into a very interesting position to make a late dash for finals football. Marconi Stallions will have only one objective on Sunday against Parramatta FC with the side re-opening their finals aspirations last weekend after disposing of Sydney Olympic 5-1. Although the Stallions will need other results to go their way, a win against bottom-placed Parramatta FC is a must to keep the faint hopes alive. Giosue Sama will be oozing with confidence following his hat-trick against the Blues, meanwhile captain courageous Nahuel Arrarte will know exactly how to charge his teammates up for the clash. Parramatta FC have gone off the boil following their midseason revival, and coach Manny Spanoudakis will be looking to his players to lift and finish the campaign strongly. Fabien Iacovelli

scored late on against Sydney United to salvage the Eagles a point last weekend and the side will be hoping to take off from that strong finish. With the side difficult to break down, the Eagles front-line need to find the goals with more continuity if the side is to exact any revenge on the Stallions for the 4-1 defeat served out in the reverse fixture earlier this season. In the final match of the Round, Sydney United play host to an A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers full of confidence following consecutive victories. The Tigers have re-found the confidence that has been missing for a large part of the season, with the side performing strongly to defeat both Manly United FC and Bankstown City over the past fortnight. The return of Anthony Hartshorn to the mix has certainly assisted the side, offering Chris James and Franco Parisi an additional outlet in the attacking third. The defensive duo of Cole Tinkler and John Kelso have also been strong, marshalling the backline with expertise to lift the Tigers into a much healthier position on the League ladder. Sydney United however will be a difficult obstacle for the Tigers. The Reds will be fuming with the late goal conceded at Parramatta FC last weekend, especially with Sydney Olympic dropping more points. With top-spot within reach, Jean-Paul De Marigny's men will be looking to keep the pressure on Sydney Olympic with a win over the Tigers.

-By Joseph Carlucci

Special Feature: All States Alert – Jack Duncan On His Way

Born in Tasmania, lived in W.A. but schooled in NSW, Sutherland Sharks reserve goalkeeper Jack Duncan has had his fair share of travelling for an 18-year old.

It's true I've been around a bit but I've lived in NSW for around 10-years now so more than half my life," he states with a wry smirk. "When I first came over to Sydney I was just playing locally with Grays Point and managed to get into the U/11 Rep team and just went from there but I've always been with the Sharks although I did have two years at Marconi Stallions in the U/15 and U/16 sides. "However the opportunity presented itself to come back to Sutherland in the U/20 grade and I jumped at the chance as I felt it would further my development and playing opportunities and being understudy to Nathan Denham and having perhaps one of Australia's best goalkeeper coach's in Ron Tilsed it was a chance I couldn't dismiss." It goes without saying, some would promote, the opportunity to play at a higher level and with the coaching staff on hand at Sutherland Sharks it was a step in the right direction of the career path: "That side of things did play a part in my decision to return but Sutherland have always been there supporting me in what I've done so in all honesty it was an easy decision to make in coming back here." Somewhat like a homecoming for the likeable custodian, it must have made life a little easier also: "Certainly it did as I didn't have the travelling to contend with and also it gave me a little more time for other areas of my life as I

was going through the HSC at the time so I had that little bit of extra time to study etc. so it helped out a lot not having to go out to Fairfield three nights a week." A quiet lad off the pitch, he wouldn't mention he did well in his results but not quite enough to get into the course and profession he looks to follow later in life: "I needed 96% to get into the physio course I was after but just fell short so I'll have to work a little harder to achieve that in the future." As is often the case, Jack harbours desires of A-League football, representing Australia and perhaps one day playing overseas and if he didn't then perhaps he shouldn't be in the game now as we all aspire to be the best we can and as 'keepers don't really tend to hit their peak until around their 30's he ought to be looking longer term and higher be but as he tells it: "Yes of course but if you look at the best goalkeepers around the world they are obviously very experienced and that comes from starting where I am now and working at making it happen. "My next goal, pardon the pun, is to make the A-League and I came close last season when being on the bench for eight games with the Newcastle Jets but unfortunately, for me and not that I wish anyone ill will or harm, I didn't get on the pitch it it's something I look forward to in the next couple of years hopefully. "I see guys like Mattie Ryan

playing there who I grew up training with so it's the next level and I want to get there as soon as I can obviously." Sadly, in an ideal world and being a Liverpool fan he would love to one day turn out for the Reds at Anfield as he was there for a month with the club when he was 15-years old so one can perhaps forgive him this one during which time he watched a Champions League game there and has always wanted to turn out in front of the Kop in those famous colours and citing Reina as one of his idols there is no truth in the rumour his nickname at the Sharks is 'Pepe'....well maybe not anyway? Playing behind Nathan Denham and getting match time is never going to be an easy task and will always be difficult as the amount of punishment the lad takes but then gets up and carry's on is phenomenal and as Duncan continues: "Robbie (Stanton) gave me an opportunity in the Waratah Cup against Parramatta Eagles at their ground and I was disappointed with my performance that night and the next match was all about pushing myself as hard as I could and with Nathan being one of the Premier goalkeepers in this competition for a number of years now it was always going to be a difficult task but if you want to be the best you need to learn from the best and Nathan has been fantastic in helping me along with my career, he's one of

the nicest guys around. "I have to push myself hard in training and push Nathan so that the decision the gaffer has to make each week is a tough one and hopefully keep knocking on the door for a first team spot." In five years time where would Duncan like to see himself playing if everything fell into place? "Obviously A-League for starters and then hopefully overseas because the Premier leagues of Europe are high intensity and is somewhere you are continually tested and all players like to feel they can make it and that's what they strive to achieve and I am no different in that respect. "That said, I am not looking beyond next year at this stage with the Newcastle Jets and hopefully getting an outing or two in the A-League without getting too far ahead of myself and then we'll see where we go from there." His work at the Jets is twofold as firstly to support the first team goalkeepers and/or Youth team custodian and also working in the office with clerical duties etc. which, as any Liverpool player of the past would attest to, keeps a player grounded, focussed and usually quite humble. Here's hoping in 5-years time we are talking about the latest Australian plying his trade in one of the prestigious European competitions as it grows the interest in the code over here but also from overseas as well.

-By Micky Brock