

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE ELIMINATION/QUALIFYING FINALS – PREVIEW

By Joseph Carlucci

Finals football has arrived and all eyes will be firmly fixed on Jensen Park and Lily Homes Stadium this weekend as newly crowned Premiers Sydney Olympic enjoy a weekend off from Premier League duty. The Blues have a luxury tie against A-League side Sydney FC as Peter Tsekennis' men look to keep the momentum going in anticipation of the following weekend's semi-final against the winner of Sydney United and Sutherland Sharks. The Reds and Sharks meet this Saturday evening at Jensen Park with kick-off set for 7:00 pm. The victors will set up a shot at the Premiers at Belmore Sports Ground one-week later, meanwhile the losing side will go into an e-

limination battle against the triumphant side from the Blacktown City FC v Bonnyrigg White Eagles clash. Jean Paul De Marigny's Reds have stuck to their attacking football philosophy all season, though the side suffered a setback last weekend with a loss at home against Blacktown City. The Reds will hope to have goalkeeper Vedran Janjetovic back between the sticks, meanwhile Ufuk Talay and Steve Hayes will be called upon to pull the strings in midfield. The Sharks only just hold an edge following the previous two meetings this season. A 0-0 draw at Sydney United Sports Centre in Round 7 was followed by a 1-0 win for the Sharks in a highly entertaining encounter at Seymour Shaw in Round 18. The

Sharks will once more look at the trickery of Panni Nikas in the front-third, with the attacking midfielder adding much fantasy when the Sharks attack. A sturdy defensive line that bounced back from the disappointment against South Coast Wolves a fortnight ago to defeat Bankstown City last weekend, the Sharks will rate their chances of lining up an encounter with Sydney Olympic. On Sunday afternoon at Lily Homes Stadium, Blacktown City FC and Bonnyrigg White Eagles meet in a replay of last season's grand-final. Both sides have had their moments this season with an indifferent run of results, though the prospect of facing elimination from this season's championship race will certainly lift these

two sides on Sunday. Blacktown City have the edge over the White Eagles this season with two victories from both matches in the regular season, as the defending champions look to again pip their opponent in the championship series. Luke Roodenburg's experience will once more be vital to his side's chances of a repeat of last season, meanwhile the White Eagles will need more of the fine passing game we have seen this season. On their day, both sides are exceptional in the attacking third with a relatively solid backline. In what promises to be a blockbuster encounter between two very capable sides on Sunday, Blacktown City FC certainly do carry a huge advantage playing the tie at home.

The Youth Report - NSW Premier Youth League *By Barry Davis*

The rain interrupted competition has finally drawn to a close and now we know which teams we will be seeing in the finals series so, in a sense, we have a new beginning for those teams and closure for the teams which did not qualify for the play-offs. There were some games left unplayed but they did not affect the final tables for the season and so there was no real need to overload an already congested period over the past couple of weeks. This season has been extremely competitive and very entertaining for all concerned so congratulations go to all the teams because they have each made a contribution to the thrills, the spectacle and the overall quality of this season. The Youth League Report will continue to provide reports throughout the finals series and then, in the week after the Grand Finals, we will look back on the season on a club-by-club and team-by-team basis.

Overview

Sutherland Sharks earned twelve points last time they saw Bankstown City but they might have been quite content with the ten points they slipped into their collective pockets this week. Marconi Stallions made off with eleven points from their first round clash with South Coast Wolves and the Stallions made an improvement on that this time when they collected thirteen points.

When they met last time around Manly United and Parramatta Eagles each took six points from the day but on this occasion Manly grabbed nine points from the day.

Ten of the first round points went to Sydney Olympic from their matches against APIA Leichhardt Tigers but this time around Olympic were forced to settle for nine points from the fixture. Bonnyrigg White Eagles had pocketed ten points from their first round match-up with Rockdale City Suns but they White Eagles did not fare quite as well this week when they earned eight points.

Sydney United and Blacktown City had split the first round points at seven apiece but Blacktown got the upper hand this time when they bagged nine of the available points. In catch-up action from Round 21 Sutherland Sharks took seven points from the four matches played against Bonnyrigg White Eagles, Blacktown City earned three points from one match against South Coast

Wolves while Sydney United and APIA Leichhardt Tigers took one point each from the one match played. In a Round 16 match Marconi Stallions took the points from Bonnyrigg White Eagles.

Grade 13

Marconi Stallions are the Premiers by a margin of seven points after they produced a 6-1 victory over twelfth placed South Coast Wolves who the stallions had beaten 1-0 the first time around. APIA Leichhardt Tigers finished the season in second spot following their 2-2 draw with tenth placed Sydney Olympic who had suffered a 2-0 loss to the Tigers in the first round.

Bankstown City ended up in third position thanks to their 2-1 success over sixth placed Sutherland Sharks who had gone down to the Lions by exactly the same scoreline last time they faced each other.

Sydney United are placed fourth after they accounted for eleventh placed Blacktown City with a 1-0 result. That repeated the outcome of the first round clash when the scoreline was the same.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles are in fifth position following their scoreless draw with ninth placed Rockdale City Suns who had claimed the first round points with a 2-1 result. In mid-week catch-up action from Round 21 Bonnyrigg White Eagles came up with a 2-1 win over Sutherland Sharks.

Parramatta Eagles and Manly United ended the competition locked together at seventh and eighth after Parramatta produced a 1-0 win this week. Their first round encounter ended in a scoreless draw

Grade 14

Marconi Stallions ended the competition as the Premiers by a margin of two points following their 4-0 success over sixth placed South Coast Wolves after their first round match was a 2-2 draw. Sutherland Sharks completed the competition in second spot thanks to their 2-0 victory over tenth placed Bankstown City who the Sharks had beaten 5-0 the first time around. The Sharks were help by a 3-0 win over Bonnyrigg in a Round 21 catch-up match played mid-week. Sydney Olympic are in third position on goal difference after they posted a 5-0 win over twelfth placed APIA Leichhardt Tigers who

had suffered 3-0 first round loss to Olympic.

Manly United are placed fourth on the final table for the season following the 2-1 win over fifth placed Parramatta Eagles who had claimed the first round points with a 2-0 win.

Seventh placed Blacktown City completed the double when they were 2-1 winners over eleventh placed Sydney United who they had beaten 4-0 in their first round meeting.

Rockdale City Suns are in eighth place after they came up with a 2-1 win over ninth placed Bonnyrigg White Eagles who had taken the first round points with a 3-0 result.

Grade 15

Sutherland Sharks are the Premiers by a margin of eight points following their 2-0 success over ninth placed Bankstown City who the Sharks had beaten by exactly the same scoreline the first time around.

Sutherland had battled out a scoreless draw with Bonnyrigg in a Round 21 catch-up match played mid-week. Bonnyrigg White Eagles finished the season in second spot thanks to their 1-0 victory over twelfth placed Rockdale City Suns who had lost the first round encounter 4-1. Manly United ended up in third place after they registered a 2-1 result over sixth placed Parramatta Eagles after the teams had played out a 1-1 first round draw.

Fourth placed Marconi Stallions were held to a 1-1 draw by eleventh placed South Coast Wolves who the Stallions had defeated 3-1 when they faced each other in the first round. Sydney Olympic completed their competition commitments in fifth position following their 4-1 victory over eighth placed APIA Leichhardt Tigers after the teams had battled out a 1-1 first round draw. Seventh placed Sydney United suffered a 3-1 loss to tenth placed Blacktown City after their first round clash had ended in a 1-1 draw.

Grade 16

Manly United are the Premiers by a margin of three points after they were 2-0 winners over fourth placed Parramatta Eagles. The teams had battled out a 1-1 first round draw. Second placed Sutherland Sharks were held to a 2-2 draw by eighth placed Bankstown City who the Sharks had beaten 2-0 when they faced each other in the first round. The Sharks had posted a 1-0 win

over Bonnyrigg in a Round 21 catch-up match played mid-week. Marconi Stallions are in third position following their 2-0 success over tenth placed South Coast Wolves who had held the Stallions to a 1-1 draw in their first round encounter. Blacktown City are fifth after they produced a 1-0 result over seventh placed Sydney United and that was the same scoreline as they had recorded in their first round clash. Blacktown also posted a 2-1 victory over South Coast Wolves in a mid-week Round 22 catch-up match. Sydney United had been held to a 1-1 draw when they faced APIA Leichhardt Tigers in a Round 21 catch-up match last week.

Sixth placed Sydney Olympic were held to a 2-2 draw by eleventh placed APIA Leichhardt Tigers who had suffered a 5-0 loss when they met Olympic last time around.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles finished ninth after they were held to a 1-1 draw by twelfth placed Rockdale City Suns who had played out a scoreless first round draw with the White Eagles.

Grade 18

Sutherland Sharks are the Premiers on goal difference after they posted a 6-0 result over eleventh placed Bankstown City who the Sharks had beaten 4-0 in their first round clash. Second placed Manly United were 2-1 winners over seventh placed Parramatta Eagles who had suffered a 3-0 loss when they faced the Sharks last time around.

Sydney Olympic have finished third following their 1-1 draw with tenth placed APIA Leichhardt Tigers who had gone down 4-0 last time they met Olympic.

Blacktown City are in fourth position after they suffered a 4-3 loss to eighth placed Sydney United who had also collected the first round points when they were 7-2 winners. Marconi Stallions scraped into fifth place on goal difference following their 3-1 win over ninth placed South Coast Wolves who the Stallions had beaten 5-4 in the first round. Marconi had also won 2-0 in their Round 16 catch-up match against Bonnyrigg played mid-week.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles missed a place in the finals on goal difference after they were 3-1 winners over twelfth placed Rockdale City Suns who had suffered a 4-1 loss in the first round encounter.