

## FOOTBALL NSW

# SYDNEY UNITED SET GRAND-FINAL DATE WITH SYDNEY OLYMPIC

Joseph Carlucci

**Sydney United ended the fairytale finals run of Blacktown City FC with an enthralling 4-2 win at Seymour Shaw on Monday night to set up a grand-final meeting with Premiers Sydney Olympic.**

The Preliminary Final was scheduled for Sunday, though the incessant downpour in Sydney forced Football NSW to re-scheduled the clash to Monday evening in what proved an extremely entertaining battle for the healthy crowd.

The reigning champions hopes of going back-to-back Minor Premiers proved to be only just out of reach as the experienced Reds from Edensor Park picked their moments to record a win and book a spot in Monday long weekend's finale.

Steve Hayes and Luka Glavas both had the Reds ahead inside the first-half, though on both occasions the Reds' lead was pulled back by Luke Roodenburg first, then Travis Major.

With both sides fighting tooth and nail in the second period with end-to-end action, it was a wonder strike from Mitchell Thompson and a superb Ufuk Talay set-piece that sealed the win for the Reds.

Early on it was Glavas that breached the Blacktown City defence to latch onto a long surging ball on 3' minutes, though the Reds striker was bundled over by Symon Jaeger who bravely left his line to punch the ball away to safety.

Blacktown City replied with a forward foray of their own in the 7' minute as Luke Austin's searching free-kick from deep found the head of Sean Rooney. The speedy striker, under the watchful eye of Michael Cindric and Mark Rudan, failed to get any real purchase on his header as the ball finished wide of the target.

At the other end 2' minutes later, Glavas tried his luck from distance after turning his marker nicely. The Reds number 11 failed to connect cleanly and the chance went begging.

The Reds found their opener in the 10' minute via a fine Steve Hayes snap-shot. The creative midfielder picked up a neat square pass, flicked on by Glavas, on the edge of the penalty-area, and with his second touch, blasted the ball into the bottom left-hand corner.

Sydney United had the reigning champions on the back foot again in the 17' minute, this time via a set-piece. A poorly dealt with corner by Blacktown City saw Ufuk Talay try his luck from distance, though with a sea of legs ahead of him, a deflection assisted Jaeger to make a routine



save.

Blacktown City captain Luke Roodenburg, as he has done countless times this season, started his side's charge. The skipper made an exceptional run at the near post to send his glancing header from Zac Cairncross' delivery from the right into the back of the net off the up-right.

Glavas sent shivers down the spines of the Blacktown City supporters in the 23' minute as he out-jumped Jaeger inside the penalty-area. Much to the shot-stopper's relief, Glavas had taken the ball away from goal, and from a difficult angle, the chance went begging.

Rooney responded for Blacktown City 3' minutes later with an ambitious attempt from outside the penalty-area, stinging the palms of Vedran Janjetovic who forced the ball behind for a corner.

Rooney then forced Janjetovic into another save on the half-hour, this time at the near post, as the striker drove a powerful effort from the left hard and low into the shot-stopper.

On 35' minutes, Sydney United restored their lead in somewhat fortuitous fashion. A poor back pass by Major gave Glavas a look in, and the speedy striker chased Jaeger's attempted clearance down, sending the ball into the back of the net despite Patrick Gatt's attempt at a goal line clearance.

The goal sparked the Reds into attack as Hayes then tried his luck with another spectacular snap-shot effort. This time though, the Reds number 10's attempt finished over the crossbar.

Vidaic then forced Jaeger into

a tremendous save down to his left on 38' minutes. The burly striker used his body well to shield the ball and get a powerful shot away, though Jaeger was equal to the task.

Blacktown City's fighting qualities came through once more prior to the break as Mark Crittenden's men found an equaliser for the second time. Major picked up a neat square ball from the right, and with all the time inside the penalty-area to line up his shot, sent a venomous drive through the palms of Janjetovic to draw his side level.

Blacktown City opened the second-half with the first attempt on goal 4' minutes in following a timid opening. Rooney tried his luck from distance, though Janjetovic was well prepared to make a comfortable save.

Simonovic followed Rooney's lead 1' minute later with an attempt of his own from distance, though the Reds defenders got bodies behind the ball to clear the danger.

Sydney United's response arrived via the feet of Hayes moments later, however the Reds' playmaker failed to pick out a teammate with his lobbed effort into the penalty-area.

The Reds were then forced to play a good 5' minutes with ten men as Michael Cindric was forced from the field with a cut above the eye. The experienced central defender had the cut attended to swiftly, though a delay in presenting the player with a new jersey – due to the blood ruling – resulted in the referee not allowing the player to return to the field.



Sydney United went close to re-taking the lead on the hour as Mitchell Thompson found a yard of space at the back post. With the goal at his mercy, Blacktown's Travis Major made a world class sliding tackle to thwart the danger.

Both sides opened up as the end-to-end action commenced with both sets of players putting in a mighty effort. A series of half-chances followed, though Sydney United made the most of their openings via a superb Thompson strike. The Reds midfielder hit a sweet dipping long-range drive that left Jaeger routed to the spot as the Sydney United players and supporters rejoiced opposite the main grandstand.

Sydney United maintained the pressure with a Talay free-kick stinging Jaeger's palms on 76' minutes. The Blacktown City shot-stopper read the situation smartly, diverting the ball behind for a corner.

Despite Blacktown's best

efforts to get forward it was the Reds to carve out another opening in the 80' minute. Vidaic was played through on goal, and from an acute angle saw his goal bound drive parried wide by Jaeger who got down quickly.

Roodenburg went close with a diving header at the other end, though the captain only just failed to make contact with substitute Ray Miller's delivery from the left.

Major followed his captain's lead with a well-drilled diagonal effort from the right, though Janjetovic watched the ball flash across the face of goal.

Blacktown City kept the ball in the Reds half as Mitch Long weaved his way inside the penalty-area before curling his effort inches wide of the post in the 86' minute.

Mitchell Duke followed moments later with an angled drive at the near post, forcing Janjetovic to divert behind for a corner.

Sydney United should have put the result beyond reach in the 88' minute as Glavas created space for himself on the edge of the penalty-area before firing his effort over the crossbar.

The result however was made secure in the 90' minute as Talay beat Jaeger with an exceptional free-kick. The former A-League star curled his effort over the wall and out of the shot-stopper's reach.

To Blacktown City's credit, the players continued to press for a goal during the 5' minute injury-time period. Roodenburg fired a powerful drive in the 1' minute of additional time, though Janjetovic claimed comfortably.

Duke then carved out a chance after a neat through ball by Roodenburg, though the retreating Reds defenders ensured a clear attempt on goal would not eventuate.

With the referee calling a halt to proceedings in the 95' minute, it was the Reds that were left standing, labelling up the praises of their travelling supporters.

Sydney United coach Jean Paul De Marigny was delighted with his side's showing:

"Very happy with the performance tonight, I thought the boys did really well against a very physical Blacktown City side," explained De Marigny.

"The boys followed the instructions carefully, and I thought we dominated early and deserved the lead.

"We scored some great goals which was credit to the boys, and we played some flowing football up front which was great.

"I am very happy for all the players as it has been a tough

season with a lot of effort put in by all, so this grand-final berth is certainly well deserved," De Marigny concluded.

**Blacktown City FC coach Mark Crittenden was upbeat despite the result:**

"Of course we would have liked to go through to the final, we really wanted another grand-final appearance to go back-to-back following last season's triumph.

"I am really pleased with the boys tonight as we did put in a big effort, and nearly pulled it off.

"We conceded some soft goals, in the first-half, which you cannot do against a side as experienced as Sydney United.

"Many people spoke of Blacktown City as being the same team as last year at the start of the campaign, though tonight's line-up boasted only four starters from last year's grand-final.

"We did lose some big names from last season, though we went very close to achieving what many thought was impossible at the start of the season with a very young side – so all in all, I am proud of each of my players tonight," ended Crittenden.

**Sydney United 4** (Steve Hayes 10', Luka Glavas 35', Mitchell Thompson 72', Ufuk Talay 90')

**Blacktown City FC 2** (Luke Roodenburg 20', Travis Major 40')

**Monday 26th September, 2011**

**Seymour Shaw, Miranda**  
**Referee:** Ryan Shephard  
**Assistant Referees:** Adam Coombes and Steven Nguyen  
**Fourth Official:** Leigh Pigram

**Sydney United:** 1.Vedran Janjetovic; 3.Mitchell Spear, 4.Michael Cindric, 21.Mark Rudan, 38.Tomislav Mijic (8.Shane Lyons 53'), 19.Mitchell Thompson (14. Petar Markovic 90'+4'), 23.Ivo Bosnar (C), 10.Steve Hayes, 15.Ufuk Talay, 13.Ben Vidaic, 11.Luka Glavas

**Substitutes Not Used:** 18.Daniel Rezo, 12.Mathew Bilic, 20.Ryan Norval

**Yellow Cards:** Tomislav Mijic 38', Ufuk Talay 73'  
**Red Cards:** Nil

**Blacktown City FC:** 1.Symon Jaeger; 4.Travis Major, 5.Patrick Gatt, 7.Luke Roodenburg (C), 13.Matt Lewis, 16.Luke Austin (17.Adam Jenner 85'), 10.Mitch Long, 11.Milorad Simonovic (15. Ray Miller 73'), 12.Seaun Rooney (3.Mitchell Duke 80'), 19.Zac Cairncross, 9.Kain Rastall

**Substitutes Not Used:** 8.David Cain, 40.David Bradasvic  
**Yellow Cards:** Zac Cairncross 88'  
**Red Cards:** Nil