

## news

## NSW PREMIER LEAGUE ROUND 7 – PREVIEW

Joseph Carlucci

**APIA-Leichhardt Tigers v Rockdale City Suns, Friday 11th of May, 8:15 pm Lambert Park, Leichhardt****Last Week: APIA-Leichhardt Tigers 2 Sydney Olympic 1  
Rockdale City Suns 2 Manly United FC 1**

We have Friday night football this week with APIA-Leichhardt Tigers and Rockdale City Suns going head-to-head at Lambert Park. Both sides enter the contest following important wins to their respective campaigns in Round 6, the Tigers claiming the scalp of reigning champions Sydney Olympic, meanwhile the Suns secured its first win of the season with a gutsy 2-1 win against Manly United FC.

These two sides have played some attractive football this season, though it has been a rather difficult run in-terms of results that have seen the two sides figure in the bottom places on the ladder thus far.

The Tigers have been re-energised by the arrival of new signing Ethan Gailbraith who made a successful debut last weekend, meanwhile the goal scoring exploits of fellow Kiwi import Andrew Bevin, and the fine form of Franco Parisi, have all played a massive part in the Tigers turning their season around. The Suns have a new coach in Mark Rudan, and the former defender with international experience has already made a good impression with his charges following the side's first week together. Rudan can count on the likes of Ricky Perinich and Peter Apolevski to lead the younger players, with Huseyin Jasli and Giorgio Speranza regular fixtures for the Suns this season.

An open game is expected on Friday evening, and it may come down to which team best masters the bumpy playing surface to claim the points.

**Bonnyrigg White Eagles v Blacktown Spartans, Saturday 12th of May, 7:00 pm Bonnyrigg Sports Centre****Last Week: Sydney United 58 FC 1 Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0****Blacktown Spartans 1 Sutherland Sharks 4**

League leader Bonnyrigg White Eagles will be after 'blood' this weekend following their first loss of the season against stern rival Sydney United last weekend. The White Eagles sailed into a commanding lead at the top of the League ladder after five consecutive wins, though the loss against the Reds will have Brian Brown's men pumped for a big showing against the visiting Blacktown Spartans on Saturday evening.

Brown will be looking to get his players to basics following some uncharacteristic errors in defence last weekend led to defeat – ultimately setting up Elsid Barkhousir for the winning goal. The visiting Blacktown Spartans will enter the game as 'underdogs' and this tag will not bother coach Ben De Haan the slightest. The Spartans have managed only four-points from their opening six matches, leaving the side still in striking distance of a mid table placing. Simon Zahra will be unavailable through suspension, though Greg Kondek and Sean Mitchell will be eager to build further on their recent positive performances for the club. A tough task ahead for the newly promoted NSW Super League side, though the perfect chance to pull off an upset against the League leader.

**South Coast Wolves v Parramatta FC, Saturday 12th of May, 7:00 pm John Crehan Park****Last Week: Marconi Stallions 4 South Coast Wolves 3  
Parramatta FC 0 Blacktown City FC 2**

The travelling Eagles have a mammoth task ahead of them when they visit the South Coast on Saturday evening to face the Wolves. South Coast has enjoyed a fabulous start to the season, and the side very nearly pulled off a big scalp with a late comeback at Marconi last weekend falling agonisingly short. Peter Simonovski and Mark Picciolini have both been in great touch for the Wolves, though to single out only a few players in this team would be unfair. The entire make up of the team has been great this season, with the side well prepared, and very united, with the performances offered by the likes of Chris Nathaniel, Nick and Cameron Littler and Michael Robinson lifting the spirits of the Wolves supporters who have been



starved of serious championship assaults in recent seasons. The visiting Parramatta FC will have nothing to lose however, and it could be a positive situation for Lee Sterrey's young side to give the tie a real go. The Eagles have shown some inexperience this season, leaking some soft goals and failing to be incisive in the front-third, though positives for the side have come out of each match, something the Eagles coaching staff are hoping to build on this season.

**Sutherland Sharks v Marconi Stallions, Saturday 12th of May, 7:00 pm Seymour Shaw Park****Last Week: Blacktown Spartans 1 Sutherland Sharks 4  
Marconi Stallions 4 South Coast Wolves 3**

An open, attacking match is expected at Seymour Shaw on Saturday evening when Marconi Stallions visit Sutherland Sharks. Both sides netted four goals last weekend as the Sharks made a point on improving their away form in their win. The Stallions on the other hand were made to sweat it out late on as the Wolves attempted a massive comeback – Luke Casserly's men managed to grind out the three-points.

Sutherland has been strong at home with Matt Bailey and Panni Nikas enjoying a good moment of form, meanwhile across the back, the Sharks always keep things tight with a united defensive line.

Marconi's fine attacking prowess will definitely test Sutherland this weekend, though the Stallions will need to be wary at the back with Bailey, Nikas and Hussein Salameh all very capable of punishing opposing defences.

With a perfect playing surface and two sides who like to get forward, there is a sense that goals will be seen on Saturday evening.

**Blacktown City FC v Sydney Olympic, Sunday 13th of May, 3:00 pm Lily Homes Stadium****Last Week: Parramatta FC 0 Blacktown City FC 2  
APIA-Leichhardt Tigers 2 Sydney Olympic 1**

Two-points separate these two sides when they meet on Sunday, with Blacktown City holding the upper hand against the reigning champions.

Mark Crittenden's men remain the only unbeaten side this season, despite the side contending with ten-men in four of the six matches to-date.

A major boost for Blacktown City last weekend was James Monie's brace – the striker breaking his personal 'duck' for the season get his campaign up and running.

Sydney Olympic enter the encounter after losing against an impressive APIA-Leichhardt. Last season's champions will need to improve in front of goal, as the goals have not been as

free-flowing as last season.

Any encounter between these two physical sides always provides action aplenty, and the supporters on Sunday will certainly be treated to an action-packed Sunday afternoon this weekend.

**Sydney United 58 FC v Manly United FC, Sunday 13th of May, 4:00 pm Sydney United Sports Centre****Last Week: Sydney United 58 FC 1 Bonnyrigg White Eagles 0****Rockdale City Suns 2 Manly United FC 1**

In the late Sunday afternoon match, Sydney United 58 FC will be aiming to further close the gap on League leader Bonnyrigg White Eagles when they host Manly United FC.

The Reds handed Bonnyrigg their first loss of the season last weekend, with Jean-Paul De Marigny welcoming back striker Elsid Barkhousir after a spell on the sidelines due to injury – Barkhousir's return paid immediate dividends with the striker netting off virtually his first touch midway through the second-half. The Reds will be hopeful of having Steve Hayes and Ben Vidaic back for the encounter, meanwhile defensively, the side has proven already that they are very difficult to break down. Manly United's season has been a difficult one to-date. Apart the fact that the side has played each of their opening six matches away from home – in anticipation of 'green light' for their home ground Cromer Park to be used – the side has struggled to secure points. Craig Midgley's men have competed in each match to-date, though it has been squandered chances in the attacking third, and some lapses in defence, that sees the side languishing in eleventh-spot on the ladder.

The Northern Beaches side will be hoping for goals from the likes of Scott Balderson, Adam Foti and Colin Iley, as injury concern surround Chris Payne after the striker was forced to leave the field shortly after half-time due to injury.

**Round 7**

Fri 11/May 8:15 PM APIA-Leichhardt Tigers – Rockdale City Suns Lambert Park

Sat 12/May 7:00 PM Bonnyrigg White Eagles – Blacktown Spartans Bonny. S C

Sat 12/May 7:00 PM South Coast Wolves – Parramatta FC John Crehan Park

Sat 12/May :00 PM Sutherland Sharks – Marconi Stallions Seymour S P

Sun 13/May 3:00 PM Blacktown City FC – Sydney Olympic Lily Homes

Sun 13/May 4:00 PM Sydney United 58 FC – Manly United FC Syd Utd S C