

news

CHRONOPOULOS LEADING THE WAY AT STALLIONS

James Chronopoulos is not only a first class goalkeeper – he has previously been the NSW Premier League Goalkeeper of the Year – he is also one of the most loyal and reliable players in the NSW Premier League.

Loyalty is part of Chronopoulos' DNA – he has been at Marconi since he was 10 years of age and in first grade since he was 17 years old. Now, at 24 years of age and arguably in some of the best form of his career, he still loves his role at the Marconi Stallions. "I love the boys here," he said. "You come in here at Marconi, year in and year out, and you have a great bunch of guys to play with. We are close to each other. I'll be here every year if the club wants me." Marconi is currently experiencing a great run of form and it is no surprise to see Chronopoulos, and some of his teammates, openly expecting to play in finals football. "We are currently on a good run and finals football is definitely what we expect," he said. "After that we'll see what happens but we have done very well so far." As one of the most impressive goalkeepers in the NSW Premier League over several seasons, it is sometimes

hard to fathom how he has not made the transition to A-League football. Furthermore, with the advent of the Wanderers entering the A-League next season, it's a little surprising to see how a local junior – such as Chronopoulos – is not yet on the books. For a goalkeeper he is young and may have some 15 years ahead of him if another former Marconi goalkeeper, Mark Schwarzer, is anything to go by. However, Chronopoulos is also humble enough to let others speculate while he works on a fulltime basis for RPG Demolition in the construction industry. "It's up to them [A-League teams] to discuss," he said. "I haven't been approached just yet. "I would love to play A-League. If the time comes and they need someone like me, then I'll step in. "I think that if I have a good year, I may be a chance. It's a bit frustrating but I just have to put my head down and bum up as they say," he concluded.

MARCONI STALLIONS' number one shotstopper James Chronopoulos

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GEORGE SOURIS STILL EXCELS IN NSW PREMIER LEAGUE FOR SUTHERLAND

By SIMON HILL

Fox Sports football commentator

You beauty ... George Souris and his Sutherland Sharks celebrate victory. Football is supposedly a young man's game these days - but try telling that to former Wollongong Wolves defender George Souris.

At nearly 43, Souris, who won two NSL championships with the Wolves, is still going strong in the New South Wales Premier League with Sutherland Sharks - and still picking up the silverware. On Sunday, Souris captained the Sharks - coached by his former Wolves team-mate Robbie Stanton - to their fifth trophy in just four years, as they defeated APIA Leichhardt 4-1 in the final of the Waratah Cup at Cromer Park in Manly. Stanton describes his skipper, who is three years his senior, as «a phenomenon» and reckons he could go on for another couple of years at least. «I've given plenty of guys the chance to come in and take his place,» says Stanton.

Stanton...»But none of them have kept it for long - he just gets better every year. His take off is still really good, he rarely gets caught in a foot race, he's excellent in the tackle...and he lasts the full 90 minutes when others are flagging.» Souris had been out with injury prior to

Sunday's final, but returned to put in a man of the match display, and Souris believes good habits, practiced through a lifetime of senior football are the key to his longevity. «I just love the game,» says Souris. «I do extra training by myself - people believe you should slow down when you get older, but I'm of the opposite view. If you don't do

extra stuff, your body starts to feel it.» Stanton adds:

«He puts a lot into his preparation, it's kept him out for within 48 hours of was in recovery and passion to second to none, e prepares better league players on ise.» Stanton also's input on the ucator. is play a very and of football - -based, but with an feel. It's aggressive, tempo - and the club are developing players who are starting to attract attention, such as Hayden Morton, Tyson

Rhodes and Blake Powell, who recently returned from a trial in Thailand with Buriram United. All are believed to be in the sights of A-League clubs.

After defeating Sydney FC 3-0 in a pre-season friendly last year, the Sharks would dearly love to test themselves against teams from the senior competition on a more regular basis. But with the FFA Cup on the backburner for now, Stanton remains unsure whether the proposed new second tier - currently going by the working title of the Australian Premier League - is a good solution for the next level down. «It could be very expensive for clubs,» says Stanton. «The Sharks are okay financially, but personally, I think the New South Wales Premier League is a good competition. Clubs need to grow by having the right infrastructure first. The FFA Cup though would be a good measuring stick for us, - we could then judge how ambitious we are as a club.»

But the Sharks may have to continue their growth without their veteran talisman on the park next season. Although George Souris wants to keep on playing, new regulations under the «Player Points» system means he may be forced into retirement. With clubs only allowed a maximum of 120 points per squad, and the system weighted towards promoting youth, Souris may have to continue his football career from the sidelines, where he is already in the process of acquiring his coaching badges - but not if he can help it.»

The points system is all talk at the moment,» says Souris. «I would hate to leave the Sharks, but I'm not going to retire early for the sake of a points system, so if necessary I'd go elsewhere.»

So, it looks like a career which started with Parramatta Eagles in 1994-1995, and peaked in front of 43,000 at Subiaco in 2000, will go on into a 44th year - surely making him the oldest active senior footballer in Australia.

