



## Sydney Olympic defeat Blacktown City to lift Pre-season Cup



Sydney Olympic made it six wins from six to lift the 2013 National Premier Leagues IGA NSW Mens 1 Pre-season Cup after a hard earned 2-1 victory over Blacktown City FC at Lily Homes Stadium on Saturday evening.

Elsid Barkhousir did the damage for the victors as Peter Tsekenis' offseason signing from Sydney United 58 netted either side of Matthew Mayora's equalising goal for Blacktown against his former employers.

The final pitted the tournament's best attack (Blacktown with seventeen goals) against the tournament's best defence (Olympic with five conceded) which set the stage for an intriguing battle in the warm autumn conditions in Sydney's west.

Fine individual performances from the experienced Paul Henderson and 16-year old Blake Tuxford in goals for Olympic and Blacktown respectively kept both attacks at bay on several occasions in a tightly fought contest that saw Olympic edge the hosts in both performance and on the scoresheet.

Olympic started the match brightly with Hussein Salameh looking lively in the opening minutes as the visitors held the early momentum.

Amaury Gauthier caused early concern for Blacktown when he stole the ball as Patrick Gatt looked to play out from the back; Blacktown's young custodian Blake Tuxford was first to react, darting off his line to steal the ball from Gauthier's feet.

The hosts soon settled into their stride and began to find their usual free-flowing attacking movement, however Olympic's physical backline kept their opponents at a distance with Yianni Fragogiannis blazing Blacktown's first effort over from 30 yards.

Troy Danaskos' perfectly weighted aerial throughball released Barkhousir on the left flank soon after; Olympic's frontman cut back for English import Kingsley Williams who scuffed his shot wide from the edge of the box.

Olympic's next chance fell to Gauthier who received the ball from Salameh unmarked in

the box before seeing his placed effort well held by Tuxford's diving save.

Blacktown responded on the break with Ray Miller releasing Luke Clifford on the right flank before the defender's driven cross was cut out by a diving block by Brett Studman.

Studman got himself in on the action at the other end minutes later as he headed wide William Angel's floated free kick.

The visitors continual pressure in attack was rewarded with a penalty soon after as the tricky Salameh ran at Sean Rooney in the Blacktown box before going down under the striker's challenge giving referee Steve Lucas no option but to point to the spot.

As Salameh received treatment on the sidelines Barkhousir stepped up to send Tuxford the wrong way and calmly slot the ball into the back of the net to break the deadlock.

Salameh looked for déjà vu as he burst into the box in Olympic's next attack yet Pat Gatt made no mistake, sliding to take the ball cleanly with a textbook challenge to clear the ball for a corner and avoid another spot kick.

Blacktown regrouped and began to press further forward in search of an equaliser with Mayora floating Matt Lewis' cross over the crossbar with a misplaced header around the half hour mark.

The hosts continued to find space on the left flank and punished Olympic with the equaliser soon after as Travis Major burst into the box before squaring the ball for Mayora who coolly turned the ball past Henderson and inside the far post to level against his former club.

Muted celebrations reminiscent of Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo scoring against his former club Manchester United in the UEFA Champions League ensued as Mayora respectfully raised his arms and made his way back to halfway while his teammates celebrated with Major after the midfielder's inch perfect cross.

Chances were few and far between for the remainder of the half as the sides went into the

interval with scores level.

The second half kicked off in similar fashion before Olympic strung together a flurry of chances to force their way back into the lead.

Danaskos fired wide from the edge of the box before Petar Markovic's throughball handed Barkhousir a half-chance on the edge of the box.

The in-form striker took full advantage, firing a clinical finish over Tuxford and under the crossbar to send the travelling fans into raptures.

Both former Sydney United 58 recruits combined well in what was one of the plays of the match.

Olympic's next attack saw the ball fall kindly for Salameh who saw his mishit shot well held before Barkhousir's teasing cross floated onto Angel's head; only a brilliant reflex save denied the winger as Tuxford parried the ball away for the defence to clear to safety.

Mark Crittenden responded on the hour mark, injecting former Bonnyrigg White Eagles attacker Harris Gaitatzis and Japanese import Ryuji Miyazawa into his attack as his side began their hunt for another equaliser.

Blacktown almost found their way back into the match soon after as Rooney sprinted clear however Henderson reacted sharply to burst off his line and beat Rooney to the throughball.

A Barkhousir smart cutback handed substitute James Demetriou a golden opportunity to give Olympic some breathing space with a quarter hour to go, however pressure from the onrushing Gatt and Zac Caimcross did enough to put the striker off as he sent his powerful finish over the crossbar.

Rooney came closest to finding an equaliser for Blacktown, the attacker unleashed a rocket from the edge of the box to draw a brilliant punch from Henderson who seemed to be the only player on the pitch not surprised by the blistering speed of the effort.

Danaskos provided Barkhousir the chance

to polish off the win and a hat-trick in the dying minutes as he lifted the ball over the Blacktown backline to meet Barkhousir's well-timed run, however the striker's volley cannoned back off the inside of the post and bounced clear.

Tempers flared in the injury time as Keiran Paull's reckless challenge left Brett Studman sprawled across the turf; the ensuing melee between players, benches, and coaches the only blemish on an otherwise entertaining evening of football as Olympic held on for the win.

Sydney Olympic coach Peter Tsekenis had a lot to be happy about post match, taking time out to discuss the win and his side's success in keeping Blacktown's prolific attack at bay:

"That's what we play for, we play to win," said Tsekenis.

"It's satisfying even though it's a Pre-season cup as it was there to be won and we're working toward preparing our team for the season and took the opportunity to win a trophy.

"We're happy with that and now we can concentrate on the first game of the season next Saturday night against the Central Coast Mariners Academy. I'd noticed that they'd scored quite a few goals but I saw they also conceded a bit so I thought that if we could stop their supply - we've got a pretty strong defence in general - and then used our strength up front with our speed I thought we could hurt them and as it turned out we got the fruits out of it. They're a tough side and sometimes you've just got to go out there and give 100% and see what happens."

Tsekenis also praised his new recruit in Barkhousir whose brace got his side over the line this evening:

"He's always scored goals at this level," said Tsekenis. "I basically brought him in to score goals, which is what he gets paid for so we'll keep him fresh and make sure the rest of the boys support him and he'll keep scoring goals.

"We'll need that if we want to compete for the title this year."