

## Sydney Olympic senior coach and Technical Director Gorka Etxeberria says Sydney Olympic are 'growing up' as a club as the Spaniard looks to lead the Blues to success in 2018.

**E**txeberria arrived in Belmore in June last season and guided Olympic to a fifth-place finish but were eventually eliminated in round one of the finals by would be Champions Manly United.

Despite the premature exit, Etxeberria's Olympic had embraced the Spaniard's philosophy and offered glimpses of the exciting potential that the coach says will be fully unveiled when the 2018 NPL NSW campaign commences in a month's time.

"We are very excited about the season because Olympic is growing little by little", he said.

"It was not an easy moment when I arrived last year because not only was I adapting to a new country and Australian football but the players were adapting to my style and my philosophy.

"But every day the players are finding this easier.

"We want to win, of course, the goal this season is always to win."

Etxeberria carries an immensely decorated history of coaching experience among a catalogue of storied clubs in Spain and is already becoming a central figure in fostering the development of the game at

one of Australia's proudest and oldest institutions.

"I am enjoying it, Australia is a marvellous country."

"The only thing that is difficult for me is learning English."

"But what makes this easy is that Australia has a very good sporting culture, so it is easy to understand the culture of Australian football and help Sydney Olympic learn from the footballing culture of Europe."

Olympic were one of the league's canniest outfits under Etxeberria's reign last season and the Belmore club have bolstered their squad significantly courtesy of a range of recruitments on the local and international spectrum.

Versatile Sydney FC youngster Nicola Kuleski joins teammate George Timotheou in making the move from the Sky Blues, while talented Sutherland Sharks prospect Callum Fitzpatrick will also don Olympic blue this campaign.



Further recruitments in the defensive third include the additions of former Sydney United 58 defender Riley Woodcock and promising youngster Rafael Jimenez Serrano, a former Australian youth international with experience in Spain.

Yu Kuboki was Olympic's central goalscoring threat in 2017 with 11 goals but the Japanese attacker's departure has been filled by experienced Spanish attacker Alejandro Sanchez from second division outfit CD Tuledano.

Sanchez has featured in a handful of La Liga matches and will not only provide goal scoring nous but offer a potentially lethal combination with front-man Radovan Pavicevic.

Olympic fans get their first chance to see the pair in action when they host Bonnyrigg White Eagles at Belmore Sports Ground on Sunday 11th March at 3.00pm.

**Gorka Etxeberria..**  
Sydney Olympic senior coach and Technical Director



Grant Lee ..  
Sutherland Sharks coach

## Sharks hungry for better success in 2018

haven't qualified for the finals series since 2013 but Lee hopes this blend of youth and experience will bring Sutherland back into the championship mix.

**“**We're feeling pretty good about this season to be honest, we've got a lot of boys back who are ex-

Sutho players.

"Sutherland has always produced good footballers - a lot of good players come through this system, it's just a matter of making it viable and building interest so that these boys can come back and play for the club - and that's happened this year, which is nice."

The Sharks offered flashes of brilliance in 2017 including a memorable 2-1 victory over would-be champions Manly United in round twelve but were unable to sustain the consistency required to truly mount a top-six challenge.

Lee was appointed head coach in May of last season following the departure of Carlos Villazon and says pre-season has

been spent erasing the reoccurring defensive and concentration flaws that have plagued the Sharks in recent seasons.

"We were probably working too hard last season", he said.

"There was a lot of intensity and a lot of good things happening for 70-80 minutes but that last 15 minutes almost seemed as if we were red lining for too long and we could never sustain the full 90.

**“**We now have a better quality of player that has played at a higher level and are a bit stronger both technically and physically."

Only Parramatta FC finished with a worse defensive record than Sutherland last campaign and Lee has recruited former Hyundai A-League star Jacob Tratt and Hayden Morton to remedy these issues at the back, while Ryan Norval will replace retiring Sharks legend Nathan Denham between the sticks.

The Sharks have boasted their

options in the final third substantially thanks to the captures of former Sydney United 58 players Nick Olsen and Adrian Vranic will also call Seymour Shaw home after signing on from the Northern Beaches based side.

**“**Sutherland won the Premiership and Championship double in the U20's last season and

while this has resulted in the departure of several young prospects, including attacking starlet Matias Da Silva Santos, Lee says the likes of Lachlan Everett and Jake Borrromeo will be pushing for first team positions.

They'll have to compete with the likes of Juan Zapata, Lachlan Hughes and Leo Malfara who have all bolstered the depth of the Sharks squad.

Sutherland open their 2018 campaign away to staunch and local rivals Rockdale City Suns at the new synthetic turf, Ilinden Sports Centre at 5pm on Sunday 11th of March.

Sutherland Sharks coach Grant Lee says the Sharks are poised to surge up the NPL NSW Men's competition ladder in 2018 after assembling an exciting blend of traditional Shire youth talent with an array of seasoned NPL NSW veterans.

The Sharks finished tenth in a disappointing 2017 campaign and