

Sydney Olympic - Hakoah Sydney City East 2-1

Sydney Olympic fought their way to a hard earned 2-1 Round 4 victory over Hakoah Sydney City East at Belmore Sports ground on Good Friday. All three of the afternoon's goals came as a result of set pieces with George Timotheou and Alejandro Sanchez-Lopez scoring either side of Oliver Green's equaliser to give Olympic their third consecutive home win of the season.

Play was often scrappy throughout the match as the bobbly pitch made it difficult for both sides to generate continuity and create chances, allowing dead ball situations to take centre stage and inevitably decide the result. With the win, Olympic continues their bright start to their 2018 National Premier Leagues NSW campaign with three victories from their opening four matches under new head coach Abbas Saad. Hakoah came into the match keen to bury the memory of last Saturday's late collapse against Sutherland Sharks, and they went about things the right way as they came flying out of the blocks during the opening minutes. In doing so they created the first chance of the game as captain Bradley Walker put Green into Olympic's box with a masterfully lobbed through-ball from his own half. Paul Henderson, confident as ever in between the sticks, spread his frame to block Green's attempted finish from point blank. Mitchell Stamatellis, on his first return to Belmore Sports Ground since his off-season move East, impressed with his defensive work and distribution throughout the match. He was next to threaten from range but to no avail as Olympic weathered the early storm. By the quarter hour mark the hosts had well and truly found their feet to pull momentum in their favour. They continually sought to get the majestic Max Burgess on the ball, and the playmaker did not disappoint as he expertly dictated the tempo and put the likes of William Angel and Spanish sensation Sanchez-Lopez into threatening positions. Burgess and Angel combined for a well-worked corner which appeared dangerous until the linesman's flag indicated offside to rule out Sanchez-Lopez's shot which hit the bar. A poorly timed challenge from another former Sydney Olympic player, ex-Blues youth defender James Coombes handed Olympic a golden

opportunity from the dead ball on the edge of Hakoah's box. Burgess drove his free kick into the wall before Jinya An sliced the rebound well wide to let Coombes off the hook. The visitor's defensive line took an organisational blow moments later when Walker succumbed to injury and was replaced by Cameron Draper. The armband was handed to Stamatellis who threatened his former employer's goal once again with a powerful shot from the edge of the box following a Hakoah corner. The veteran's strike flashed high and wide of goal as the home fans breathed a huge sigh of relief. With half time looming Sanchez-Lopez appeared through on goal after charging onto another Burgess throughball, yet Connor Shaddock recovered well to scramble the ball away to safety. The ensuing corner would be Hakoah's undoing. An's delivery wreaked havoc in the box as a brief moment of pinball culminated in Timotheou's right boot sticking the ball between a maze of players and into the net to break the deadlock. Olympic took their hard earned lead into the interval and would emerge from the sheds seeking more of the same in the second half. Hakoah were not going to make it easy for them as they began the second half as lively as they did the first. Their direct running looked particularly threatening, especially from Kiwi international Andre De Jong who was a continual thorn in Olympic's side. De Jong's run into the box was cut down by Rafael Jimenez just before the hour mark. The fullback was perhaps lucky to still be on the pitch having already been booked in the opening minutes and was necessarily subbed by Saad moments later in the interest of keeping eleven men on the pitch. Hakoah were inching closer as Timotheou's expert block was needed to deny De Jong before Henderson produced a brilliant save to deny Green following the striker's



magical turn in the 18-yard box. The striker was left with his head in his hands but would not to be denied much longer as the following corner eventually fell for Green who leapt to turn the ball in and restore parity on the scoreboard. The equaliser opened the match right up as both sides drove forward in search of the winner. Burgess dragged a shot wide after a fine dart inside from the right flank before yet another set piece proved decisive. A crisply delivered free kick from Burgess on the left was headed back toward the near post for Sanchez-Lopez to nod home and draw wild celebrations from the delighted Olympic faithful. It was the Spanish stars third goal in four games. Hakoah came close to sharing the points with Green glancing a shot wide before a recycled corner led to

Timotheou turning the ball onto his own post. The ball bounced into Henderson's safe hands as Olympic saw out a lengthy extra time period to hold onto the win. Sydney Olympic playmaker Max Burgess was delighted with the result after running the show in midfield for much of the encounter. "It was a great three points," said Burgess. "Hakoah are a strong side, very physical, they'll beat a lot of teams this season so we're very happy to get the three points. "It's now three wins from three at home so we're building a fortress here and the boys are starting to gel so things are looking positive. "We're starting to build that winning mentality and the vibe is really good in the changing room so the sky's the limit for us this season." Hakoah Sydney City East coach Gavin Rae was understandably disappointed by

the result which could well have seen spoils shared had the late drama gone their way. "It was a bit scrappy from both teams," remarked Rae. "It's obviously absolutely frustrating to lose it as it was the kind of game that both teams don't play well and you just take a draw and moved on to the next game so to lose it is gutting. "At set pieces you've always got to defend well and we didn't today. "We'll not make changes in terms of the way we want to play, we just need to cut out the silly mistakes but we're not far off."

Sydney Olympic 2 (Timotheou 43', Sanchez-Lopez 80') **Hakoah Sydney City East 1** (Green 68')

Referee: K. Patterson **Assistants:** J. Bell, K. Robinson **4th Official:** H. Carwardine

Sydney Olympic: 1. Paul HENDERSON, 2. Thomas WHITESIDE, 4. George TIMOTHEOU, 5. Rafael JIMINEZ (33. Nik TSATTALLIOS 58'), 6. Nikola KULESKI, 7. William ANGEL, 8. Jason MADONIS (19. Darcy BURGESS 90+2'), 10. Max BURGESS, 11. Jinya AN, 14. Alejandro SANCHEZ-LOPEZ, 24. Hagi GLIGOR

Substitutes not used: 9. Radovan PAVICEVIC, 23. Riley WOODCOCK, 30. Lachlan WATSON

Yellow Cards: Rafael Jimenez 4' **Hakoah Sydney City East:** 1. Anthony BOUZANIS, 2. Connor SHADDOCK, 3. Michael KOUTA, 4. Bradley WALKER (6. Cameron DRAPER 39'), 5. Mitchell STAMATELLIS, 8. Oliver GREEN, 10. Andre DE JONG, 14. Anthony FRANGIE (21. Stewart DUNCAN 61'), 17. Harry JONES (7. Jack GREEN 85'), 20. James COMBES, 60. Takayuki NOJI

Substitutes Not Used: 13. Robert EZEKIEL, 25. Max EPHRAIM

Yellow Cards: Connor Shaddock 86'

Player Ratings 3 – Max Burgess (SO) 2 – Mitchell Stamatellis (HSCE) 1 – George Timotheou (SO)