



By George Stavroulakis

A last gasp Jordan Murray header has helped a 10-man APIA Leichhardt Tigers snatch a 1-1 draw against Sydney Olympic at Belmore Sportsground on Sunday. It was a heartbreaking result for Sydney Olympic who dominated the majority of the match and should've taken a six point lead at the top of the National Premier Leagues NSW competition ladder.

Sydney Olympic - APIA Leichhardt Tigers 1-1

Jinya An gave the home side the lead in the 35th minute with a cool finish from inside the penalty area after a scrap for possession from a looping corner kick. APIA were determined to fight back but were reduced to 10-men when Brandon Lundy was shown a second yellow and sent off in the 68th minute.

However, the visitors would find the equaliser they were ever so desperate for as Murray jumped above two markers to nod home the equaliser and his 12th goal of the season. The result means Olympic stay at the top of the competition with a three point lead over the second placed Tigers. Both sides were like a bull at a gate from the opening whistle, launching into action with intent.

The game was end to end as Olympic and APIA refused to give their opponent an inch. Despite the high octane start it took until the 10th minute for the first true chance of the game when a powerful drive from Jason Madonis was cleared off the line by Lundy. In the 15th minute APIA had a chance of their own, when Themba Muata-Marlow headed over the bar. Sanchez was unlucky not to have found the net in the 24th minute when he slipped after cleaning up a sloppy save from Necevski. Finally the home side's dominance paid off in the 35th minute when they took a 1-0 lead.

Jinya An was in the right spot to volley home from eight yards out after an attempted APIA clearance from a corner. Spaniard Sanchez continued his struggles with traction in the 39th minute when he slipped while one on one with the keeper and sent his shot sailing inches past the woodwork. Olympic had the upper hand in the opening stanza and deserved more than their 1-0 lead at the break. APIA came out of the interval determined to nab an equaliser.

Henderson denied the Tigers with a brilliant save in the 53rd minute from a Tasuku Sekiya shot. The veteran shot stopper was at it again with another brilliant diving save to stop what appeared a certain goal from Japanese import Sekiya. APIA were pushing for a goal and had the momentum on their side, all until a mindless challenge from Brandon Lundy in the 68th minute.

Already on a yellow card, the former Newcastle Jets winger was given a second yellow and sent for an early shower by referee Kurt Ams for a lazy tackle from behind on An. Despite creating multiple headaches for the APIA defence, Olympic striker Sanchez was struggling to find the back of the net and spurned another golden chance in the 76th minute.

Henderson was putting in a mammoth perform for

Olympic and denied Jordan Murray an equaliser in the 76th minute with yet another brilliant diving save. With six minutes left on the clock, APIA finally found a breakthrough. A brilliant lofted ball into the box from Adrian Ucchino found Murray who had left above two markers to head past Henderson and level the scores a 1-1. Determined to take home a point, APIA brought on

bar. Max Burgess had a chance to snatch victory with the final play of the game, but he to couldn't find the target as APIA clung on for a hard earned point. Olympic coach Abbas Saad rued what could've been a season defining win for his side as they were forced to settle for a draw.

"It is a very frustrating result for us. We dominated for the majority of the match but just couldn't take our

chances when it mattered most," he said.

"The boys put in a very good shift today against an experienced opposition but we failed to make the most of our opportunities and that's really all it comes down to.

"It feels like a defeat which is shame because we played very well.

"Hopefully we can take something away from this game which makes us stronger moving forward."

APIA coach Billy McColl was a relieved man at full time.

"I am very happy to take a point away from the match," he said

"We didn't play very well in the first half and it took us to go down to 10-men to really lift and fight our way back into the contest.

"We did well to get an equaliser and had a chance to possibly even get a winner.

"I'm happy with a draw. It is a long season and we still have plenty of chances to reclaim top spot before the season is out.»



an extra defender and took off goalscorer Murray for the final five minutes. Olympic weren't ready to keel over and accept a draw that easily and should've taken the lead in the 89th minute. A poor goal kick from Necevski fell at the feet of Sanchez who sprinted towards goal unmarked with only the keeper to beat.

However, Sanchez's poor night in front of goal didn't have a happy ending with the his finish hitting the cross

Match Stats

Sydney Olympic FC: 1 (An 35') - **APIA Leichhardt Tigers FC:** 1 (Murray 84)

Referee: Kurt Ams

Assistant referee: K Robinson & H White

Fourth official: M Riedi

Sydney Olympic: 1. Paul HENDERSON, 2. Thomas WHITESIDE, 4. George TIMOTHEOU, 6. Nikola KULESKI (33. Nikolas TSATTALIOS), 7. William ANGEL, 8. Jason MADONIS(9. Radovan PAVICEVIC), 10. Max BURGESS, 11. Jinya AN, 12. Zach MACKENZIE, 14. Alejandro SANCHEZ, 23. Riley WOODCOCK

Substitutes not used:18. Brendan HOOPER, 19. Darcy BURGESS, 20. Ezequiel CONSONI,

APIA Leichhardt Tigers: 1. Ivan NECEVSKI, 2. Nathan MILLGATE, 4. Joshua SYMONS, 7. Howard FONDYKE (10. Franco PARISI), 8. Corey BIZCO, 11. Jordan MURRAY (Paul GALIMI), 15. Themba MUATA-MARLOW, 16. Sean SYMONS, 18. Adrian UCCHINO, 19. Brandon LUNDY, 20. Tasuku SEKIYA.

Substitutes not used: Stephan ADATINNI, Sam GUILISANO, 22. Blake TUXFORD

Yellow cards: Lundy 12',68' Millgate 33'

Red cards: Lundy 68'