



By George Stavroulakis

**Sydney Olympic snatched all three points late against a gallant Manly United in a 2-1 victory at Cromer Park on Saturday night.**

## Manly United - Sydney Olympic 1-2

**The sides** were separated by an 87th minute winner from Max Burgess. The competition front-runners had been quick off the blocks, taking the lead through Radovan Pavicevic inside ten minutes.

**However while** it initially appeared that Olympic would comfortably dictate proceedings, Manly struck back in the 28th minute through Sam Wilson. Both sides experienced periods of dominance throughout the second half, however the visitors' class eventually shone through, as they punished a wasteful Manly performance. **The opening** exchanges belonged to Olympic. Max Burgess was the first to find the target, as his 5th minute shot was palmed outwards by Shaun Catlin. However Abbas Saad's men would not have to wait much longer for the opener. Radovan Pavicevic capitalised on a wayward pass to find himself through on goal, confidently driving the ball into the bottom left corner.

**Opportunities continued** to flow through headers from Alejandro Sanchez and Jinya An inside 15 minutes. However the Champions slowly but surely re-entered the contest. And with one of their first clear sights on goal, Manly were level.

**Sam Wilson** on his return from injury, was greeted with an almighty roar as he beat Paul Henderson with

a precise finish after 28 minutes. Manly pressed on and finished the half stronger, but failed to convert from set-pieces and a three-on-two counter attack which fell to Scott Balderson.

**Despite this**, the host continued where they left off in the second

half, creating a raft of half chances which left the Olympic shaken. However as Manly failed to enforce an advantage, the tide of momentum began to shift back to Olympic. **Saad introduced** Nikola Kuleski and Jason Madonis on the hour, and their fresh legs injected new energy into the visitors.

**All of** a sudden Manly found themselves pinned in their own half, as Pavicevic's cross-cum-shot floated narrowly wide of the far post on 71 minutes. The corners began to stack up for Olympic, and Riley Woodcock stabbed one wide following a goal-box scramble. The breakthrough finally arrived with less than five minutes to play.

**The ball** was fizzed in hard to the feet of Max Burgess, who in a single motion swivelled and thumped the ball into the back of the net.

**#Manly coach** Paul Dee was disappointed with elements of his side's performance: "We fought hard for the game but our execution wasn't good throughout. "Considering the way that we fought, I thought it was deserving we at least came away with a point but we gave away a silly goal late. "It wasn't a good way to finish the game for us. "That was uncharacteristic of us, we need to address

a few things at training and look forward to a couple of home games and a better showing from the team."

**#Olympic boss** Abbas Saad was rightfully elated with the three points: "I thought we were the better team. "(It was) a hard fought match, it is always difficult to play here (Cromer). "We knew there wasn't going to be a lot of chances created as they are very well disciplined. "We played our football, and I thought the pressure payed off. "Full credit to the boys, every week they give it their best. "Most importantly is the way we play our game, and we are really enjoying it at the moment."

### Match Stats

**Manly United** FC 1 (Wilson 28') Sydney Olympic FC 2 (Pavicevic 9', Burgess 87')

**Referee:** R. Mattei Assistant Referees: L. Greenshields, A. Hosnani Fourth Official: H. Carwardine

**Manly United:** 20. Shaun Catlin, 2. Kieren Paull, 3. Jamie Lobb, 4. Travis Oughtred, 5. Sam Wilson (7. Braden Cheng 45'), 6. Dominic Ferguson, 9. Dylan Macallister (11. Nikola Taneski 64'), 10. Brendan Cholakian, 13. Scott Balderson (14. Mitchell Rooke 72'), 21. Joseph Fox, 23. Daniel Alessi  
**Substitutes Not Used:** 1. Dylan Mitchell, 12. Leigh Egger  
**Yellow Cards:** Kieran Paull 85'

**Sydney Olympic:** 1. Paul Henderson, 2. Thomas Whiteside, 4. George Timotheou, 7. William Angel, 9. Radovan Pavicevic (18. Brendan Hooper 89'), 10. Max Burgess, 11. Jinya An, 12. Zach Mackenzie (6. Nikola Kuleski 62'), 14. Alejandro Sanchez, 19. Darcy Burgess (8. Jason Madonis 62'), 23. Riley Woodcock  
**Substitutes Not Used:** 20. Ezequiel Consoni, 21. Stephen Athanasieris

**Yellow Cards:** Radovan Pavicevic 32', Zachary Mackenzie 56', William Angel 66'

## Nabbout: «Lebanon wanted me and contacted me a lot»

Australia bolter Andrew Nabbout says he repeatedly received invitations to play for Lebanon years before his Socceroos debut.



**Nabbout received** his first Australia call-up for the March friendlies against Norway and Colombia, making his debut in the 4-1 defeat in Oslo.

**However, the** Lebanese FA had been on his case for six years, since he was a 19 year-old at Melbourne Victory.

**«They contacted** me a lot, especially in the last few years at Newcastle, because they wanted me to play in the qualifiers leading into this World Cup,» Nabbout told the Sydney Morning Herald.

**«In the** back of their mind they had the 2019 Asian Cup as well, and they wanted me to pledge allegiance early on. Actually, it started well before. When I was at Victory I got the first email then, asking where my loyalty lay.»

**Nabbout is** proud of his Lebanese roots, and his determination to wait on a call from Australia wavered in the wake of his release by Victory in 2015.

**«There was** a chance my career wasn't going to kick on much further... it crossed my mind, what was the best decision to make? Do I play for Lebanon or do I stick to my guns and try and play for Australia?» he said.

**His decision** to hold out has been resoundingly vindicated. After half a year playing in Malaysia, Nabbout returned Australia with Newcastle Jets, and after 18 goals in 46 A-League appearances, he finally got the call from the FAA. Now he's a likely starter in Australia's opening World Cup match against France.

**«For me,** my loyalty always lied here,» said Nabbout. «I've always wanted to play for the Socceroos.»