



By George Stavroulakis

# NPL 1 NSW Men's 2018 ROUND 15 Preview

Round 15 has arrived in the National Premier Leagues NSW competition and only eight games remain before the finals and what a weekend its come on with the FIFA World Cup kicking off this Friday.

**Sydney Olympic** has a vice grip on top spot with a six point lead ahead of second placed APIA Leichhardt Tigers.

**This week** Olympic goes east to take on Hakoah Sydney City East as they look to maintain their place at the ladder summit.

**APIA Leichhardt** Tigers will be out to make amends for last weeks defeat when they travel to Blacktown City on Sunday.

**In the** round's other matches, Manly United plays host to Marconi Stallions, Sydney FC takes on Sydney United 58 and Sutherland Sharks travel south to face off against Wollongong Wolves.

**Ilinden Sports** Centre will be the site of the final match of Round 15 when the resurgent Rockdale City Suns clash with Bonnyrigg White Eagles on Sunday night.

**Hakoah Sydney City East FC v Sydney Olympic FC, 4.30pm Saturday at Hensley Athletic Field**

**A gritty** win last round was a big confidence booster for Hakoah Sydney City East and they will be out to add another three points to their tally on Saturday when they host Sydney Olympic FC.

**The 2-0** win against Sutherland Sharks in Round 14 was a solid result for Hakoah with new striker Amaury Gauthier displaying all his class to net his second goal in three games. **The result** moved Hakoah into the top five for the first time this season and they will be determined to hold onto their finals place over the remaining rounds of the competition.

**Hensley Athletic** Field is never an easy place to come to and the Blues will be in for a fight come Saturday afternoon.

**Sydney Olympic** were also winners last round as they snatched a late winner against Manly United FC.

**Now with** a six point lead at the top of the competition, Olympic are in the drivers seat in the race for the Premiership title.

**Thomas Whiteside** has been a breakout player this season for Abbas Saad's side with the centre back displaying calm and composure beyond his years.

**The return** of Andre de Jong from international duty with the New Zealand All Whites will be a massive boost for Gavin Rae's young side giving them a formidable attacking threat.

**Sydney Olympic** will go into the match as favourites but Hakoah are by no means easy beats and will push the league leaders for the full 90 minutes.

**Manly United FC v Marconi Stallions FC, 5pm Saturday at Cromer Park**

**The pressure** is on Manly United to fight their way back into the top five and nothing but a win will be enough when they host Marconi Stallions on Saturday.

**United have** failed to hit the heights of last season's Championship winning team this campaign and inconsistent results has the Paul Dee coached team sitting in 7th position after 14 rounds.

**Their opponent** Marconi Stallions come into the game flying high on confidence after securing a shock upset against APIA Leichhardt Tigers last round.

**Sam Wilson** made a brilliant return from injury last week netting the Northern Beaches side only goal in what was a solid first hit out. He will be determined to replicate that form against Marconi.

**Marko Jesic** was required to move into the number nine role last round after the injury to Sean Rooney, but the former Newcastle Jets man proved he was more than up to the task. There was also the debut of former Sydney FC striker Hassan Jalloh who will look towards gaining more match time on Saturday.

**Both sides** are fighting to keep their seasons alive and the competition points will come at a premium.

**Manly will** be slight favourites at home but it would be no surprise if an inspired Marconi team made it two wins in as many weeks.

**Sydney FC v Sydney United 58 FC, 7.45pm Saturday at Lambert Park**

**Rooted to** the bottom of the competition ladder, Sydney FC will be desperate to work they way up the standings with a win against Sydney United 58 on Saturday night.

**It has** been a tough season for the Young Sky Blues despite a number of impressive displays.

**A draw** on the road in Wollongong against the Wollongong Wolves last round was a respectable result for Robbie Stanton's team but they will need much more than that if they are to avoid the wooden spoon.

**For Sydney** United 58, the match will be a chance to get their game back after a disappointing 2-0 loss to Rockdale City Suns last Saturday.

**Sydney FC** have been forced to reshuffle their attacking stocks after the departure of boom attacker Hassan Jalloh to Marconi Stallions last week.

**Jalloh's exit** has heaped extra pressure on Jeremy Cox at the top of the Sydney attack, but if Luke Ivanovic's performance against Wollongong is anything to go by Stanton may have a ready made replacement.

**Panny Nikas** delivered a vintage performance in a losing team last round and new Reds coach Miro Vlastelica will rely on his veteran nous and experience to help get the team back to its best.

**Sydney United 58** will be the favourite to win this match but a Sydney FC upset is by no means out of the question **Wollongong Wolves FC v Sutherland Sharks FC, 3pm Sunday JJ Kelly Park**

**It has** been a spluttering season so far for Wollongong Wolves and the time is now for the side to get their campaign into gear, starting with their clash against Sutherland Sharks on Sunday afternoon.

**A 1-1** draw at home against bottom side Sydney FC was a disappointing result for Jacob Timpano's side with their slim finals hopes hanging by a thread.

**Sutherland Sharks** were on the wrong side of a losing result themselves in Round 14 as they suffered a 2-0 defeat to Hakoah Sydney City East.

**Defender Darcy** Madden took taken the spotlight from his higher profile teammates in recent matches and he could be in for a busy night against the Sharks dangerous attack.

**Leading Sutherland** up front will be Adrian Vranic with the striker a constant presence going forward and always a good chance to score. He will be looking at hitting the back of the net as the striker's last goal came way back in round 7.

**Wollongong has** proven to be inconsistent this season with their best games good enough to beat the league's top sides but the complete opposite at their worst.

**Sutherland are** a young and exciting side, albeit prone to a lapse in concentration.

**Wollongong at** home will be the favourites but this game could easily go either way.

**Blacktown City v APIA Leichhardt Tigers FC, 3pm Sunday at Lily Homes Stadium**

**The stakes** will be high this Sunday when third placed Blacktown City play host to rivals APIA Leichhardt Tigers.

**Blacktown come** into this match after an impromptu week off with their round 14 clash against Bonnyrigg White Eagles postponed due to wet weather.

**The break** should put them in good stead for this top of the table clash against APIA who suffered a shock 1-0 defeat last week to an inspired Marconi Stallions.

**Mark Crittenden's** City team has hit a few hurdles in recent weeks and has struggled to pick up the points they would have expected to collect.

**Against APIA** nothing short of their best will be enough and



Ultra Football Team of the Week for Round 14 with Sydney FC's Cameron Devlin along with fellow attackers Rockdale City Suns Football Club - Ilinden's Alec Urosevski and Marconi Stallions FC's Marko Jesic leading the line. Hakoah Sydney City East FC's Anthony Frangie bags a mention as does APIA Leichhardt Tigers FC custodian Ivan Necevski... *μυζί με* Kieren Paull, Anthony Frangie, Max Burgess, Marko Jesic, Ivan Necevski, Michael Beauchamp, Panos Nikas και Darcy Madden

Blacktown will look to midfield maestro Devante Clut to steer the action in attack.

**Clut's silky** dribbling and eye for a pass will be vital if they are to unlock the Tigers' defence.

**For APIA** the focus will be capitalising on their opportunities. **Striker Jordan** Murray has hit a wall after a fast start to the season which included 11 goals in 11 matches. He has failed to hit the back of the net in his past three games but is an ever present threat and it will be only a matter of time before he rediscovers his scoring touch.

**These matches** are always physical and hard fought contests with neither side willing to give an inch.

**Blacktown need** this win to have a chance of leapfrogging APIA into second spot, while the Tigers need victory to keep their slim Premiership hopes alive.

**It's too** difficult to pick a favourite for this clash, but one thing for sure is that it will be a blockbuster.

**Rockdale City Suns FC v Bonnyrigg White Eagles, 5pm Sunday at Ilinden Sports Centre**

**A three** game winning run has Rockdale City Suns flying high and they will be out to make it four from four when they play host to Bonnyrigg White Eagles on Sunday.

**Paul Reid's** Suns have turned the corner in emphatic style after a shocking start to the campaign with a 2-0 win on the road against Sydney United 58 their latest victory.

**It appear's** Rockdale finally has their act together and will be the team to beat down for the final eight games of the regular season.

**Wet weather** meant Bonnyrigg was given the week off last round after their match was postponed. The extra recovery time would've been music to the ears of White Eagles boss Brian Brown and his injury hit side.

**Against United 58** it was Alec Urosevski who deserved the spotlight with a man of the match performance. The winger has been the one constant for the Suns this season and he looks as if he is only improving as the season goes on.

**Jee Wook** Woo has been a player to watch for Bonnyrigg this campaign and the young attacker could be a game changer for the White Eagles on Sunday.

**At home** and full of confidence after three straight wins, Rockdale will be the clear favourites when the two sides go head to head.

**However, Bonnyrigg** has claimed some big scalps this season when they've played to their potential.

**Expect Rockdale's** attack to lead the charge in what should be an exciting end to end contest.

## Current Ladder 14th Round

	Team	GP	Pts	W	D	L	GF	GA	+/-
1	Sydney Olympic	14	32	10	2	2	25	11	14
2	APIA Tigers	14	26	8	2	4	31	15	16
3	Blacktown City	13	24	7	3	3	20	11	9
4	Sydney United	14	20	6	2	6	19	18	1
5	Rockdale City Suns	14	20	6	2	6	26	27	-1
6	Hakoah Sydney	14	18	5	3	6	21	20	1
7	Sutherland Sharks	14	17	5	2	7	19	20	-1
8	Manly United	14	17	4	5	5	19	21	-2
9	Marconi Stallions	14	17	4	5	5	16	21	-5
10	Wollongong Wolves	14	16	4	4	6	13	24	-11
11	Bonnyrigg WE	13	15	4	3	6	17	28	-11
12	Sydney FC Youth	14	9	2	3	9	18	28	-10