



SYDN



United 58 heartbreak as APIA book Grand Final spot

Penalty shootout heroics from veteran shot stopper Ivan Necevski has secured APIA Leichhardt Tigers their spot in the National Premier Leagues NSW grand final.

The former A-League journeyman made a clutch save to his right to stop Shannon Cole's penalty kick to ensure his APIA side took home a 5-4 penalty shootout win after the match finished 1-1 at the end of extra-time. It was a gripping contest from the opening whistle with United 58 taking a shock lead against the run of play courtesy of a brilliant volley from Glen Trifiro. APIA laboured through the rest of the match desperate to find an equaliser but struggled to break down a solid Reds defence. However, a moment of magic from APIA stars Franco Parisi and Sean Symons provided the difference as Symons finished off a brilliant ball into the box to level the scores eight minutes from time and send

the match into extra time. After an end to end extra time it came down to the shootout with Necevski's save setting up Parisi to fire APIA to an incredible victory. It was a cagey opening to the match with neither side truly testing their opposition as both APIA and United 58 tried to find their groove. An serious injury to youngster Anthony Vrilic only four minutes into the contest forced a major reshuffle for the home side with Chris Payne brought on to replace the defender. United 58 and APIA traded free-kicks from the edge of the penalty area but both teams failed to test the keeper. Adrian Uchino's glorious ball to the back post from the other side of the park was a glorious chance for Sean

Symons but his first time volley sailed high and wide. Symons had another brilliant chance only moments later in the 32nd minute when his rasping shot from inside the edge of the area was saved by Thomas Manos. APIA was slowly building some momentum going forward while their opponents seemed more and more happy to sit back and absorb the pressure. A breakaway from central defender Themba Muata-Marlow caught United 58 off guard and they nearly paid the price as an audacious chip from Tatsuku Sekiya sailed inches over the crossbar. Sekiya was at it again moments later firing a powerful effort towards across the goal which was saved by a diving Manos. While APIA may have been

in control of the contest, Sydney United 58 were the team to break the deadlock.

An incredible first time volley from the edge of the penalty area after 43 minutes cannoned into the back of the net and past the outstretched arms of Ivan Necevski to give United 58 a 1-0 lead at the half. APIA didn't race out of the blocks at the restart as many expected and it was in fact United 58 who had the first chance of the second stanza. Sam Perre found space at the edge of the 18-yard box after a United 58 counter attack but he could only fire straight to the keeper. A cheeky back heel from Payne sent a scare through the APIA camp but the effort from The Reds striker went wide. Desperation began to creep into APIA's game as they threw players forward in search of an equaliser. The home side remained calm despite the extra pressure and looked solid at the back.

It should've been 2-0 to United 58 in the 75th minute. Perre once again failing to hit the target after receiving possession completely unmarked just inside the penalty area. With APIA seemingly headed for an unlikely defeat, it took a moment of magic from Tiger's stars Parisi and Symons. A deft pass from Parisi fell perfectly into the stride of Symons on the edge of the penalty area with the APIA captain hammering a half volley into the top of the net to level the scores a 1-1. The visitors had one last chance in regulation when a Parisi free-kick found the head of millgate at the back post but the defender's effort wasn't on target.