

2018 encounters

Round 2... APIA Leichhardt Tigers 2 - Sydney Olympic 0

Sunday, March 18 at Lambert Park

APIA Leichhardt continued its flawless start to the season with a 2-0 win against Sydney Olympic at Lambert Park. The Tigers had their chances early in the match but it took a 39th minuted penalty from George Howard for the home side to break the deadlock. Both goalkeepers had plenty of work to do in the second stanza with both APIA's Ivan Necevski and Olympic's Paul Henderson making clutch saves to keep their team in the contest. However, APIA would have the final laugh as Sean Symons doubled the home side's lead in the 72nd minute with a headed finish from a sublime Jordan Murray cross. The win was APIA's first home win of the season and builds on their opening round victory against Manly United. For Sydney Olympic the result was a reality check after their opening week win and would go on to be only one of two losses they would suffer over the first 11 weeks of the competition.

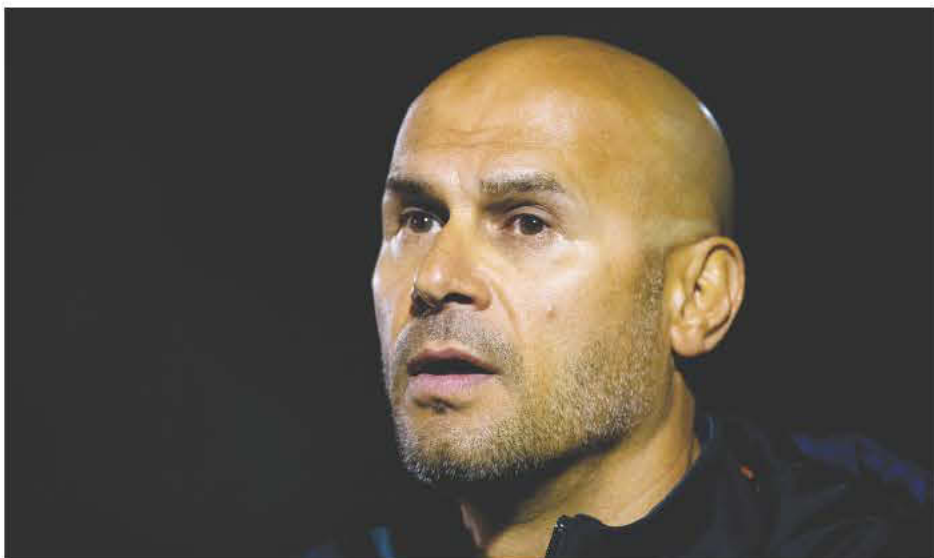
Round 13... Sydney Olympic 1 - APIA Leichhardt Tigers 1

Sunday, June 3 at Belmore Sports Ground

A last gasp Jordan Murray header helped a 10-man APIA Leichhardt Tigers snatch a 1-1 draw against Sydney Olympic at Belmore Sportsground. 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. 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 meant Olympic remained at the top of the competition with a three point lead over the second placed Tigers setting up a nail biting premiership race.

2018 National Premier Leagues NSW Men's Grand Final

Sydney Olympic...Abbas Saad



On taking over as coach days out from the start of the season..

If you told me on my first day that I would lead the team to the premiership and would contest a grand final I would've thought you were crazy. My first thoughts were to just get to know the players and make the squad as unified as possible. It took me six weeks to really get the run of things but if it wasn't for the players we wouldn't have achieved what we have.

On the secret to Olympic's success..

One of the main messages I have preached this season is togetherness and being a close knit group which worked for each other on and off the pitch. I think it has

been an important part of our success and it has developed a great atmosphere among the team. For me having an honest and respectful environment where everyone can trust each other was imperative and thankfully everyone responded really well and embraced that philosophy.

On what winning the double would mean for Sydney Olympic..

Sydney Olympic is a big club and winning goes hand in hand with that. There has been seven seasons since we last won a title and it is important we return to that level where every year we are in contention. It means everything to the players, the owners and the fans that this club does well so hopefully we can achieve that success.

2018 National Premier Leagues NSW Men's Grand Final

APIA Leichhardt Tigers

Billy McColl



On handling the pressure of a grand final..

We have been there before and understand what playing in big matches is like. In my mind there is no pressure on the boys. We are where we set out to be and will be completely prepared for everything that comes our way. There has been a lot of work on mentality and how to handle pressure this season so it's not a concern for me at all. On APIA's grand final preparations.. The preparations for this match haven't been ideal for us because of the heavy workload we have had in the weeks leading up to the game. Injuries are really taking a toll and it has meant this week has been a very light training week as we try to get everyone in the best possible shape for the grand final. There are some players who have been

in serious doubt to play and I have had to keep a few possible options open. At this point of the year everyone in the team know what they need to do so we won't be adding anything new into our game plan.

Why the scars of last year's defeat won't hold APIA back..

We have gone the whole year working towards a set goal and I think the team is fully prepared to handle whatever comes their way on Sunday. This season we have become much stronger mentally so I don't think any mental scars will be a concern for this team. It has been a different approach overall this campaign and at the end of the day I think we have what it takes to get the win.