

NSW



By George Stavroulakis



# TOP NPL CLUBS NEED NEXT LEVEL TO SURVIVE, WARNS SAAD

Sydney Olympic's championship-winning coach Abbas Saad has warned that most clubs in Australia's National Premier Leagues will die unless a second division is set up in two years.

**Shortly after** leading Olympic to a 3-1 win over APIA Leichhardt in the NSW grand final, club legend Saad said teams like Olympic were becoming frustrated because they had nothing more to aspire to beyond the NPL.

**Olympic deservedly** won the match at Leichhardt Oval after taking a two-goal lead at half-time with well-taken strikes from Radovan Pavicevic and Spanish import Alejandro Sanchez.

**The Spaniard** netted his second on the night before Themba Muata-Marlow narrowed the margin for Leichhardt with a penalty in injury time.

**Meet the former La Liga striker who gave Spain's top leagues away for NPL move**

**The grand final** win earned Olympic the premiership and championship double.

**Saad said** after the match that his delight at Olympic's remarkable achievement was offset by his frustration that he and his players could not test themselves at a higher level.

**«There has** to be another competition other than the A-League,» Saad said.

**«If this** does not happen in the next two years, many clubs

like us will struggle to survive any longer. They will die.

**«We have** enough talent in the competition to be able to compete in a B-League but at the moment the best players in the NPL are lost ... and I'm not talking about just Olympic.

**«The top** teams in Victoria and South Australia each have three or four top players but there is nowhere to go for these guys.

**«So we're** talking about six or seven teams with strong players and once you add a couple of foreigners they will be more than

**Saad said** a only benefit th feel they lack at the highes would improv of the Australi

**«For Austral** get better not internationall leagues and I relegation wot standard of players. I hav about that,» h

**Saad said** he was under no illusion that grassroots football was the bread and butter of the game in Australia and it deserved better recognition from the powers that be.

**FFA's introduction** of the FFA Cup four seasons ago was seen as an olive branch to the NPL clubs that may have been aggrieved by their omission from the A-League in 2005 but Saad believes this gesture is not enough.

**«Take today's** grand final and the passion of the crowd as two traditional clubs like Sydney Olympic and APIA

ship,» he said. os, including myself, historic clubs. But )ney can these clubs istent' league?

1 but what really are is? What's the next here is no next level. day money is going . Which is why we l a next level for the wners to keep nvesting in their lubs.»

