

nsw



By George Stavroulakis

NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUE 1 NSW

# SYDNEY OLYMPIC CROWNED NPL NSW MEN'S CHAMPIONS

**Sydney Olympic has claimed a historic National Premier Leagues NSW premiership and championship double with an Alex Sanchez brace helping them to an emphatic 3-1 win against APIA Leichhardt Tigers at Leichhardt Oval on Sunday.**

**The win** is Olympic's first grand final win since 2011, when they also claimed the premiership and championship double, while for APIA it was their second consecutive grand final defeat. Led by their Spanish striker, Olympic delivered an incredible performance where they were rarely troubled by APIA's record setting attack. Sanchez helped set the tone right from the outset creating Olympic's opener only four minutes into the contest before finding the back of the net himself twice. The early goal took the wind out of APIA's sails and they struggled to regain their composure throughout the remainder of the match. Despite their persistent efforts, the Tigers could not find their way through Olympic's defence before claiming a late consolation goal courtesy of a Themba Muata-Marlow spot kick.

**Sydney Olympic** made a lightning start to the clash and landed an early blow against APIA thanks to a sublime counterattacking move to make it 1-0. Sanchez found space in the south western corner, after a cutting pass from Max Burgess, before delivering a pinpoint ball into the box which found an unmarked Pavicevic who coolly headed home. The goal was a scare APIA could ill afford and it shook them into action with any plan of slowly warming into the game now well and truly out the window. Sekiya was proving to be a tricky customer for the Olympic defence as APIA pushed forward with intent. A last ditch challenge from Will Angel stopped the Japanese striker in his tracks only metres out from goal.

**Howard Fondyke** spurned a brilliant chance midway through the half when he fired a free-kick from the edge of the box high over the crossbar. APIA were playing a dangerous game with their side pushed high up the park desperate for an equaliser. It was a tactic which backfired 35 minutes into the half as Sanchez stung them with a blistering counter attack and fired into an empty net after dribbling around the keeper to make it 2-0. A fortuitous pass into the box created a half chance for Tigers striker Sekiya in the 43rd minute but he was unable to hit the

target. Sean Symons had one final roll of the dice for APIA before the interval but he too was unable to score after his effort was denied by Olympic shot stopper Paul Henderson. It was a sensational first half from the premiers and one to forget for APIA.

**Just like** the first half, Olympic started the second stanza with intent and should've made it 3-0 only seconds after the restart. An incredible diving save from Necevski denied a stinging Sanchez volley from only six yards out. APIA needed a moment of magic to get back into the contest and looked to a strict diet of route one football to help them find a much needed goal. Olympic's defence held strong as the Tiger's sent wave after wave of attack their way but created few opportunities or note. Henderson was finally called into action 61 minutes in as he jumped above the pack to punch away a dangerous ball into the box. His opposite number had a challenge of his own moments later with necevski making a clutch reaction save to deny Sanchez his brace. However, the former La Liga striker wasn't going to be kept out for long and made it 3-0 75 minutes in with a skilful finish. Deep into added time APIA finally had their chance as Nathan Millgate was brought down in the penalty area and referee Kurt Ams pointed to the penalty spot. Muata-Marlow dispatched a perfect free-kick to put APIA on the board but it proved to be merely a consolation goal as Olympic held on to win the historic double with a 3-1 triumph.

**A jubilant** Olympic coach Abbas Saad was lost for words after the win but praised his players for their brilliant performance. "This is a great moment for the players and I'm so happy for them," "This result is like a dream. When I joined this team as coach only four days out from the start of the season I could never imagine a result like this. "Today we executed our gameplay to perfection and once we found the early goal we were able to truly take control of the match. "Everyone played out of their skin and they all deserve their success."

**A sombre** Billy McColl reflected on what



he called a painful defeat. "Wining the grand final this year was everything the boys were working towards and to lose this game for the second straight year has been very difficult for them. "The boys played very hard but today Olympic were the better team. "We will regroup and shift our focus to our FFA Cup clash against Adelaide United in a few weeks. "This loss is by no means the end for this team. We can be proud of what we have achieved and come back stronger next year.

## Match Stats

**Sydney Olympic FC:** 3 (Pavicevic 4', Sanchez Lopez 35' 76') - **APIA Leichhardt Tigers FC:** 1 (Muata-Marlow 90+3')

**Referee:** Kurt Ams Assistant Referes: Lance Greenshields & Kearny Robinson Fourth Official: Craig Fisher

**SYDNEY OLYMPIC:** 1. Paul HENDERSON, 2. Tom WHITESIDE, 7. Will ANGEL (18. Brendan HOOPER 80'), 8. Jason MADONIS, 9. Radovan PAVICEVIC (33. Nikolas TSATTALIOS 76'), 10. Max BURGESS, 11. Jinya AN, 12. Zach MACKENZIE, 14. Alejandro SANCHEZ LOPEZ (5. James DEMETRIOU 87'), 19. Darcy BURGESS, 23. Riley WOODCOCK

**Substitutes not used:** 20. Ezequiel CONSONI, 24. Christopher GLIGOR

**Yellow Cards:** Sanchez 30'

**APIA Leichhardt Tigers FC:** 1. Ivan NECEVSKI, 2. Nathan MILLGATE, 3. Paul GALIMI (8. Corey BIZCO 71'), 4. Josh SYMONS, 7. Howard FONDYKE, 10. Franco PARISI (17. Sam GULISANO 80'), 13. David D'APUZZO, 15. Themba MUATA-MARLOW, 16. SEAN SYMONS, 18. Adrian UCCHINO, 20. Tasuku

SEKIYA

**Substitutes not used:** 5. Stephan ADATTINI, 12. Benjamin MCCARRON, 22. Blake TUXFORD

**Yellow cards:** Glaimi 43', Fondyke 49', Ucchino 78

