

## Late drama sees Campbelltown City seal NPL Finals Series Grand Final berth

### CAMPBELLTOWN CITY - SYDNEY OLYMPIC 2-1

**There was** late, late drama in the NPL Finals Series 2018 Semi-Final clash between Campbelltown City SC and Sydney Olympic yesterday. An early Sydney lead was scrubbed out before the half-time whistle, and a late Campbelltown penalty sealed things up and secured the South Australian side a 2-1 win. It means that the National Premier Leagues 2018 Grand Final will be played between NPL QLD's Lions FC and NPL SA's Campbelltown City Sydney Olympic hit the front in just the second minute of the match, with an outrageous goal from Max Burgess. He pinched the ball outside the area, and his left-footed strike beat the Campbelltown 'keeper to give the visitors

an early lead. The first half was a bit of an arm-wrestle before Campbelltown managed to find themselves a goal through Marc Marino in the 43rd minute to level things up.

**The home** side came out of the sheds firing in the second half and nearly had a goal with a few chances in the opening ten minutes. Olympic looked like they might have been in on goal in the 86th minute when Jason Madonis was in on goal, but Jake Halliday brought him down with a superb sliding tackle to send the ball out for a corner. It came in and Sydney had the ball in the back of the net through Max Burgess, but no sooner had they

wheeled away to celebrate had the flag gone up for offside and the score remained 1-1. With the clock winding down and the scores locked it looked like the match might have been heading to extra-time, but there was late drama to come.

**Campbelltown attacker** Luigi Ditroia chased after the ball inside the penalty box and attempted to use his body to shield it, but was brought down by Jinya An and the referee pointed to the spot. The captain, Iain Fyfe, stepped up to the spot for the penalty. The veteran defender made no mistake, and Campbelltown after having gone down 1-0 in the 2nd minute, won it in the 93rd.

# AUSTRALIA FACING ASIAN CUP, WORLD CUP BAN OVER FFA ROW

Sport Australia has spelled out its objections to the FIFA-instigated overhaul of the FFA Congress - and thrown Australia's international football future into jeopardy in the process.

**In February** FIFA ordered an independent Congress Review Working Group be set up to draw up an action plan to open up the body that elects the FFA board after the FFA blocked previous attempts.

**The group** published their report last month with a comprehensive revamp of the way football and the FFA is run in this country, opening the door to much greater involvement from players, A-League clubs, women and a pathway for NPL and fans to get involved too.

**The blueprint** was immediately rejected by the FFA and chairman Steven Lowy has vowed to stand down if it is backed at an extraordinary general meeting next month.

**Now the** Government-funded Sport Australia has got involved, threatening the Socceroos' defence of the Asian Cup in January and the Matildas place at the 2019 Women's World Cup.

**FIFA does** not allow any government interference in football associations, frequently suspended membership of any affected country, ruling them out of any international competitions, among other consequences.

**Uruguay, Spain,** Ghana and Nigeria are among the many who have either been banned or faced a ban over state meddling in football.

**But today** Sport Australia made a clear threat to axe taxpayer funding of football - with around \$5m a year - if the congress review proposals are put into action.

**A letter** from Sport Australia CEO Kate Palmer to FFA members details exactly why she believes the CRWG's

proposals go too far and give the congress too much power at the expense of the FFA Board (which is dominated by Lowy family appointments).

**It also** warns that foreign influences from A-League

clubs could combine with player and women's group representatives to block board appointments and key decisions by veto if the congress can't reach 75% agreement.

**However the** structure of the proposed congress has been established to ensure state federations still retain an absolute majority of 55% to protect grassroots interests.

**But Palmer** repeatedly insists the planned changes do not meet Sport Australia's standards of good governance.

**And the** opening line of the summary of her lengthy response to the CRWG proposals spells out: «Sport Australia provides significant annual funding to football under the terms of the FFA Sports Investment Agreement.»

**Palmer then** warns that Sport Australia expects both high performance and good governance in return.

**But, anticipating** a backlash from FIFA, her letter adds: «These views

made by Sport Australia are to be in no way taken as interference from the Federal Government.»

**The letter** is published by federal government-funded Sport Australia on a federal government-hosted website.

**Its own** website describes it as «...the operating brand name of the Australian Sports Commission, a Commonwealth entity within the Australian Government's Department of Health Portfolio.»

**It adds:** «It is governed by a board of commissioners appointed by the Australian Government.

**«The board** determines the ASC's overall direction, decides on actual allocation of resources and policy for delegated

## CHRIS IKONOMIDIS.. FROM LAZIO TO PERTH GLORY

**Playing a** key part in Tony Popovic's Perth Glory project was why Chris Ikonmidis says he signed a three-year deal with the under-achieving A-League club. Glory unveiled the six-time Socceroo last week after he chose to leave Italian giants Lazio for a permanent move to Australia despite still having a year left on his Serie A contract.

**The 23-year-old** had previously had loan spells from Lazio with Serie B club Salernitana, Danish outfit AGF and Western Sydney Wanderers last term, where he scored three goals in an impressive 10-game stint. But after five years with the Rome side, Ikonmidis had never been able to break into the Lazio first team. The Sydney-born attacking midfielder's move to Glory came as a surprise, but Ikonmidis said he was lured by Popovic's project after the ex-Wanderers boss took over in the off-season. "It's about the project behind it," Ikonmidis told FTBL. "It's something I can build into now with a coach who wants to work with me."

**"I wanted** to be somewhere where I'm kept on my toes and I'm accountable for my performances. "I want to work with him and it sounds like a good project." Glory have never won any silverware in the A-League era, reaching one Grand Final, two FFA Cup finals and only reaching the finals in five of the 13 A-League seasons. The success-starved club have also seen off-field change with ex-Sydney boss Tony Pignata taking over as CEO. Ikonmidis's signing follows the off-season recruitment of Socceroos Matt Spiranovic, Ivan Franjic and Jason Davidson, along with Tomi Mrcela, Juande and Fabio Ferreira. The highly-rated talent impressed during his time with Wanderers last season and hopes to make a bigger impact with the benefit of a solid pre-season with his new club. "I played the last 10 games of last season," he said. "I came straight in playing and scored three goals. "I played all the games which I was happy with. I want to start the season from scratch now." Ikonmidis also has Socceroos aspirations but insisted they're not front of mind, with playing regularly seen as the key firstly. "Of course," he said. "But you can only get selected if you're playing. "For me at the moment I'm focusing on my club football and doing well at your club, that's when other benefits come like the Socceroos."

