



By George Stavroulakis

# Manny Spanoudakis St George City FA Head Coach

**... Won the Premiership/Championship double in their first year in the State League Men's and backed that up with a similar Premiership/Championship double this year in the NPL 3!!!!**



**The meteoric rise of St George City FA is remarkable given the infancy of the club, having only been formed in 2016.**

In their inaugural season in league football, St George City FA won the State League, the equivalent of the fourth tier of football in NSW, and were promptly promoted to the National Premier Leagues 3 NSW Men's competition in 2017.

**First season** in the NSW NPL 3 in 2017, and St George City FA finished a very creditable 3rd, behind Rydalmere Lions and Fraser Park. The club reviewed the season in meticulous detail, to then go on and successfully sweep all before them in 2018.

**St George** City FA have this season become the envy and benchmark of other clubs, having won the 1st Grade Premiership, the Championship series – culminating in a 2-0 win over SD Raiders in the Grand Final – as well as the Club Championship, meaning promotion to the National Premier Leagues 2 NSW Men's competition in 2019.

**So what** makes St George City FA tick?

**FNSW caught** up with Head Coach, Manny Spanoudakis, who has been at the helm since the outset in 2016.

**FNSW** – Tell us a little about how the club started a few years ago?

**Manny Spanoudakis** (St George City FA Head Coach) – Whilst St George City FA was created in 2016, the St George Football Association has a long and rich history as a football development nursery having produced many Socceroos since it was established in 1924. St George City FA's charter is to provide a development pathway for the many local juniors playing in the St George Football Association and to provide them with an opportunity to compete at an elite level in the NPL NSW Men's Senior program and beyond.

**FNSW** – What have been some of the biggest challenges the club has faced in its infancy?

**(MS)** – Establishing a new senior program presents a number of logistical and operational challenges. Assembling 3 squads from scratch takes a lot of planning and patience. Promotion is achieved by winning the Club Championship which means that we needed to apply the same amount of attention and focus to all three grades. Aytek Genc, our Head of Football, worked tirelessly to secure training and playing facilities, quality players, coaches and support staff. His extensive experience both as an elite coach and football administrator laid the foundation for what was to be an extremely successful inaugural year where we secured the Club Championship, earning promotion to NPL 3.

**FNSW** – What is the football philosophy at St George City FA?

**(MS)** – Our philosophy is to play a quick and free flowing style of possession based attacking football. This requires players to be technically, tactically and athletically astute and to be able to adapt to the rigours associated with competing in a physically and mentally challenging 26 Round season. Our philosophy is embedded within the DNA of everyone involved at the club and was exemplified this season where we scored 254 goals across all three grades.

**FNSW** – You won the Premiership/Championship double in your first year in the State League Men's and backed that up with a similar Premiership/Championship double this year in NPL 3 – how do the two triumphs compare?

**(MS)** – In our first year, we literally started with 0 players so we spent quite a bit of time presenting our vision as a club



to players and getting their buy in on that vision so that they would come across to us. We were very pleased to see that all the players bought in on our vision and strategy from day one and thankfully we won promotion to NPL 3 in our first year.

**In 2018**, we had a base of players that had already been with the club for a couple of years and they knew and understood our culture, values and goals. They become vocal ambassadors for our club so when it came down to attracting new quality people/players, they also played a key role. In a short period, we had established a strong brand and reputation as a serious, professional and ambitious football club and this allowed us to assemble very competitive squads in all three grades.

**FNSW** – Who were some of the key players during the season who surprised you with their overall performance?

**No one** really surprised me with their overall performance as I knew that all the players we recruited had great qualities both on and off the park. I was especially pleased for 18 year old Emanuel Koumis as he finished the year as the NPL 3's