

JETS CAN FLY HIGHER, PETRATOS SAYS

Newcastle star Dimi Petratos is convinced the Jets can soar a little bit higher and win the A-League this season, despite missing two key strike weapons for the early part of the new campaign.



The Jets were the feel-good story of the 2017-18 season, going all the way to the grand final after finishing last the year before. They prospered despite long term injuries to playmaker Ronald Vargas and striker Roy O'Donovan, and the late season departure of Andrew Nabbout.

While Newcastle won't enjoy the same element of surprise as they did at the start of last season, Petratos pointed out they still had success later in the campaign when they were more of a known quantity. "I'm very confident," he said.

"I think we'll do our best to replicate last season and go that one step further and try and win it.

"I believe we can.

"I think (coach) Ernie (Merrick) has recruited really well

with the new players and kept the majority of the team." Newcastle head into their season opener away to Wellington Phoenix on Sunday without O'Donovan and promising young forward Joseph Champness. Irishman O'Donovan still has eight matches of a suspension to serve for catching Melbourne Victory goalkeeper Lawrence Thomas in the face with a boot in the closing stages of the grand final loss.

Champness, who enjoyed a breakout season, is expected to miss at least the first few rounds after suffering fractured foot at training back in August. Newcastle do have depth in their attacking arsenal having signed Brazilian Jair, Mitch Austin and Kaine Sheppard. Versatile veteran Jason Hoffman has enjoyed success in a forward role in

the pre-season. Petratos felt they had the flexibility to compensate for the missing attackers, even renowned goal poacher O'Donovan.

"It will be difficult but we've got certain players that can play in different positions, so I think that's a little bonus for us," Petratos said. The reigning Jets player of the season and joint leading goalscorer with Nabbout with 10, Petratos recently signed a contract extension through to the end of the 2021/22 season. He made his Socceroos debut earlier in the year and was chosen in the World Cup squad, though he didn't get any game time in Russia. "It was a great experience for me and I can take a lot from that I think to become a better player," he said.

Football NSW's 50th anniversary of the Champion of Champions Finals will take shape this Sunday at Valentine Sports Park

Nineteen matches will be served as the main course for what will be a huge day as 38 of NSW's cream of the crop grassroots clubs will meet to determine who will be the Champion of their respective age group.

Over 300 teams participated Football NSW's prestigious knockout tournament as over five thousand plus players battled week in week out in the hope of landing a coveted spot in Sunday's Finals. Football NSW's spiritual headquarters Valentine Sports Park will come alive with football action all day with matches commencing at 8:30am while the final match kicks off at 6:30pm.

In an amazing achievement, Northern Suburbs Football Association will field the most teams on Sunday with as many as seven that will hope to capture as many titles as possible. Alongside Northern Suburbs, Manly and Football South Coast will feature four teams with Nepean, Sutherland, Eastern Suburbs, St George, Granville and Hills to feature three. Club Representatives from Canterbury (2), Southern Districts (2) and Bankstown (1) will also fight for their right to win silverware in this well-respected tournament.

A special mention to Glenmore Park (17 Men, 18 Women), Cronulla Seagulls (18 Women, 21 Men), Dunbar Rovers (Over 35 Men, All Age Women), Northbridge FC (12 Boys, 21 Women), Auburn District (14 Boys, 15 Boys) and West Pymble (16 Boys, All Age Men) all of which will have two teams pushing for glory this Sunday. All Champion of Champion winners from the Under 18's age groups and below will also feature in a special parade organised by Hyundai A-League Champions Sydney FC which will take place during their round 7 clash at Jubilee Oval when the Sky Blues take on Wellington Phoenix. All winners in the older age groups will receive match day tickets.

TAFE NSW, PLAYR, FFA, Western Sydney Wanderers and Instant Photos will also have special activations setup around the concourse at Valentine Sports Park so be sure to keep a close eye on that.

CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS FIXTURES 2018

GRADE 12 BOYS Northbridge FC (Northern Suburbs) v Balmain & District FC (Canterbury) – VSP 3 – 8:30am

GRADE 13 BOYS Arncliffe Aurora (St George) v Lake Heights JFC (Football South Coast) – VSP 2 – 8:30am

GRADE 14 BOYS Auburn District (Granville) v Kemps Creek United (Southern Districts) – VSP 2 – 9:45am

GRADE 15 BOYS Auburn District (Granville) v Castle Hill United (Hills) – VSP 2 – 11am

GRADE 16 BOYS West Pymble (Northern Suburbs) v Castle Hill United (Hills) – VSP 3 – 9:45am

GRADE 17 MEN Glenmore Park (Nepean) v Lansvale (Southern Districts) – VSP 3 – 11:15am

GRADE 18 MEN Pendle Hill (Granville) v East Bankstown FC (Bankstown) – VSP 2 – 12:30pm

GRADE 21 MEN Cronulla Seagulls (Sutherland) v Norwest FC (Hills) – VSP 2 – 2:30pm

ALL AGE MEN Coogee United (Eastern Suburbs) v West Pymble (Northern Suburbs) – VSP 2 – 6:30pm

OVER 35 MEN Dunbar Rovers (Eastern Suburbs) v Como West Jannali (Sutherland) – VSP 2 – 4:30pm

OVER 45 MEN St Michael's (Northern Suburbs) v Hurstville City Minotaurs (St George) – VSP 3 – 4:30pm

GRADE 12 GIRLS Lindfield FC (Northern Suburbs) v



Manly Vale (Manly Warringah) – VSP 1 – 8:30am

GRADE 15 GIRLS Wakehurst FC (Manly) v Earlwood Wanderers (Canterbury) – VSP 1 – 11am

GRADE 14 GIRLS Lowland Wanderers (Nepean) v Shellharbour JFC (Football South Coast) – VSP – 9:45am

GRADE 16 WOMEN Mt Colah (Northern Suburbs) v Avalon SC (Manly) – VSP 3 – 1pm

GRADE 18 WOMEN Glenmore Park (Nepean) v Cronulla Seagulls (Sutherland) – VSP 1 – 12:30pm

GRADE 21 WOMEN Northbridge FC (Northern Suburbs) v Connells Point Rovers (St George) – VSP 1 – 4:30pm

ALL AGE WOMEN Dunbar Rovers (Eastern Suburbs) v Albion Park SC (Football South Coast) – VSP 1 – 2:30pm

OVER 30 WOMEN Russell Vale WFC (Football South Coast) v Wakehurst FC (Manly) – VSP 3 – 2:30pm