



By George Stavroulakis

Sydney FC - Central Coast Mariners

Sunday, 17 February 2019 - Leichhardt Oval 5:00PM

Sydney FC have lost just one of their last 14 A-League games against Central Coast Mariners (W11, D2) and have been victorious in their last three meetings.

Sydney FC are undefeated in their last seven A-League home games against Central Coast Mariners (W6, D1), scoring four or more goals on four occasions and keeping three clean sheets in that period.

Sydney FC have won their last six A-League fixtures played in Sydney- this will be the first A-League fixture played at Leichhardt Oval.

Central Coast Mariners have led at half-time on three occasions in their last five A-League games away from home; however, they've gone on to lose each game in that period - in fact, the last time they won an A League game away from home was in Round 8, 2017/18.

Sydney FC have conceded just eight second-half goals this A-League season, the joint fewest of any team in the competition alongside Melbourne City.

Central Coast Mariners have scored 72% (13/18) of their goals in the first half of games this A-League season, the highest percentage of any team in the



competition.

Alex Brosque (Sydney FC) has scored 13 A-League goals against Central Coast Mariners, his second most against any team; in fact, Besart Berisha (16) is the only player in A-League history to have scored more goals

than Brosque against the Mariners.

Central Coast Mariners' Matt Simon has scored four goals so far this A-League season- the joint most of any **Mariners player**- the last time he scored more in a league season was in 2011/12 (7).

'It's more than just a win'

Chris Ikonmidis and his elated Perth Glory teammates recognised the significance of their 2-1 win over Melbourne Victory - they're now seven points clear at the top of the table.

After a cagey first half in which neither side could fashion a clear chance, Perth took the lead through a controversial penalty tucked away by Neil Kilkenny.

Corey Brown was adjudged to have handballed in the box, when it appeared the defender, whose hand wasn't far outstretched from his body, had little time to react.

While Melbourne appeared a little rattled by the decision and the absence of marquee Ola Toivonen and Keisuke Honda, Perth took advantage and snuck another through a flying Diego Castro volley.

The Spaniard latched on to a perfectly weighted cross from Ikonmidis in superb style, to seal a crucial three points for Tony Popovic's men.

"**It's more** than just a win, the weight of the match coming in - it's too early to be saying too much, however," Ikonmidis said.

"**We kept** to our guns, Victory always come out strong at home, but if we stayed compact and tight we knew the spaces would open up and we took our chances."

Melbourne Victory finally found their mojo with the introduction of Honda, who re-entered the A-League after a lengthy injury layoff and Kosta Barbarouses capitalised on increased forward intensity to slide in his 10th goal of the season.

But it wasn't enough for Victory, who will now be hoping that the return of their marquee signings will prove the difference, if not in the run in to finals, then in the finals themselves.

"**We've always** pushed games until the end, but they shut the game down well," Leigh Broxham said.

"**They made** it difficult for us, there wasn't too many chances in the game and they took theirs.

"**You're losing** 2-0 at home, you need to take some chances. Keisuke came on at the end and he's a quality player, he makes a difference, but it wasn't enough at the end."

