



By George Stavroulakis

Sydney FC's face-saving penalty 'a joke'

A penalty equaliser by Sydney FC was labelled “a joke” after it saved the Sky Blues from notching back-to-back losses to A-League strugglers.

Sydney were coming off a 2-1 defeat to 9th-placed Brisbane Roar and in danger of falling to cellar dwellers Central Coast Mariners on Sunday when captain Alex Brosque won his side a spot kick.

The reigning premiers had been trailing the visitors for 40 minutes at Leichhardt Oval until Brosque hit the turf and Adam Le Fondre stepped up, converting in the 76th minute.

It was the eighth time Mariners had gone into the break in the lead, and only the second time they avoided defeat.

Aiden O'Neill opened the scoring against the run of play in the 36th minute.

It was a gritty defensive display

by Mike Mulvey's men who are hoping to catch Roar and avoid the wooden spoon.

Fox Sports pundit Ned Zelic called referee Jared Gillet's penalty decision “a joke” and fellow pundit, John Kosmina, agreed.

“But you know what? A dumb pen like this was the only way Sydney were going to score this afternoon the way they were going in front of goal,” Kosmina said.

“To me it was a very, very soft penalty. Alex Brosque didn't have control of the ball, he didn't even have a touch of it before he went to ground.

“Look it's a great touch from (Milos Ninkovic) – it's a little bit

behind Brosque – but Brosque's been around a long time. It didn't take a lot of contact for him to go to ground.

“The referee went for it hook, line and sinker. He realised he wasn't going to get it anyway but I don't think it was a pen – end of story.”

It was a case of missed chances for the league's top teams this weekend after they squandered opportunities to close the gap on runaway leaders Perth Glory.

With second spot there for the taking, Sydney bossed every aspect of the game except the scoreline and couldn't overcome a resolute Mariners outfit.

But Kosmina said a draw was probably the right outcome after



a player looked to be interfering with play in the lead up to the visitors' opener.

“O'Neill a great finish – but there was a player in front of the goalkeeper, blocked his line of sight,” he said.

“No VAR but he was in an offside

position when the ball was struck so that could have been questionable as well. So maybe a draw was a fair result.”

Le Fondre's strike brings his tally to 13 for the season and keeps him ahead in the Golden Boot race.

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