



By George Stavroulakis

ROUND 1 PREVIEW — M

The long wait is over, the highly reputable National Premier Leagues NSW Men's competition kicks off in what

The 2019 NPL NSW Men's football season promises to be one of the most competitive yet as twelve clubs lock horns with eyes on the prize, namely the Premiership and Championship. **Regarded as** the best NPL competition in Australia, a number of new names will be unearthed from this year's competition as will seasoned campaigners who will once again show their worth hyping up their chargers in getting those three crucial points week in week out.

'Super Sunday', what a time to be alive, for those who won't have the chance to watch their clubs or any action at the grounds, Football NSW has you covered as each and every NPL NSW Men's game will be live streamed on the official NPL NSW Facebook and Football NSW YouTube page.

Good luck to all participating clubs, players and officials as the NPL NSW Men's 2019 will hope to be one year remembered by everyone as one of the toughest but best in the history of the competition.

Sunday 10th Match

Wollongong Wolves v Manly United

Albert Butler Memorial Park – 3pm kick-off

The battle of the beaches takes place at the makeshift home-ground for round 1 for the Wollongong Wolves as they face Paul Dee's Manly United outfit in a fascinating encounter.

It will be former Socceroo star Luke Wilkshire's first official game in charge of the Wolves and he hopes that he can kick things off with a winning start as the Wollongong faithful are hoping for finals football this year.

Wilkshire will have a number of local products at his disposal with the likes of skipper Chris Price, Darcy Madden and experienced keeper Justin Pasfield raring to go. Japanese import Takeru Okada will hope he can emulate the success of his former countryman in Yuzo Tashiro, who is now the assistant coach at the club, with some eye-catching performances while former Sutherland Sharks skipper Nick Littler will hope his huge presence at the back will steady up the club's defence. **Dee returns** to the coaching post after taking some time off due to work commitments and has done well recruiting some well-known figures along the way at Manly.

Former NPL NSW Men's Player of the Year Adam Parkhouse returns to his former club after a stint in the A-League with the Wellington Phoenix while ace marksman Dejan Pandurevic will call Cromer Park home once more after his time in Serbia with FK Zemun.

Dylan Mitchell will once again lead the charge as the club's number one shotstopper with familiar faces Kieran Paull, captain Jaime Lobb, Travis Oughtred and Sam Gallagher pushing together as a formidable back-line.

The wizard of Cromer Brendan Cholokian will hope his bag of tricks will assist in the club's fortunes alongside the hopeful goals of Nikola Taneski while a lot of the defensive midfield duties will fall on the shoulders of Dom Ferguson.

It'll be an interesting clash at the neutral venue but one that could see a few goals fly through.

Sunday 10th March

Blacktown City v Mt Druitt Town Rangers

Lily Homes Stadium – 3pm kick-off

A local derby will kick things off in Sydney's West as the new kids on the block, Mt Druitt Town Rangers make the short trip to Lily Homes Stadium to take on their highly fancied brothers, Blacktown City in a match that either team will want to win for bragging rights.

A massive crowd will be on hand to witness the Rangers' first competitive match in the top tier after gaining promotion following a successful 2018 season in the NPL 2 NSW Men's competition.

The Rangers do mean business and under the watchful eye of coach Aidan Desmond, they hope that the underdog tag given to them week in week out will work to their advantage.

Led by the charismatic Carlos Saliadarré underneath the sticks, the Rangers do boost some firepower with former Rockdale City Suns player Toufic Alameddine along with ex-Sutherland Sharks striker Adrian Vranic assisting in the club's attack. Club stalwart Matthew Clowes will hope he can steer his chargers on while look for the exciting Fijian international Alvin Singh to provide some entertainment.

Mark Crittenden's men were dealt with some massive blows entering the 2019 season with the loss of a number of seasoned campaigners with the likes of Zach Cairncross, Connor Evans, Mitchell Mallia and the Speranza brothers jumping ship to rivals Marconi.

Not to be deterred with these losses, the club has gone through a reshuffle but will nevertheless be one tough team to crack.

New faces such as the exciting William Mutch, Leroy Jennings, James Demetriou and Jackson Bandiera will be on hand to guide the club towards a new direction while it will be a special match for Emmanuel Gonzalez – a key striker that took the NPL 2 NSW Men's competition by storm...with the Rangers, he changed clubs in the off-season and will know his former teammates will be targeting him on Sunday.

With the likes of seasoned campaigners Matt Lewis, Joey Gibbs, Grant Lynch, Yianni Spyrikis and the exciting Devante Clut, write Blacktown City off at your peril who will also have former NSL star Matthew Bingley assisting Crittenden on the sidelines.

Sunday 10th March

Sydney Olympic v Sutherland Sharks

Belmore Sports Ground – 4pm kick-off

How better can Sydney Olympic get after the 2018 season they had?

They defeated everything that came in front of them as the Blues marched on to clinching a famous double taking out the Premiership and Championship in style.

Abbas Saad worked his magic and through that claimed the Coach of the Year plaudits, but will 2019 be the same?

It will be pretty close as Saad has stuck with the same squad however losing the influential Max Burgess to the Wellington Phoenix.

One player that caught the attention of many not just in NSW but across the country was that of Spanish sensation Alejandro Sanchez. The key attacker has already gone down as one of the craftiest players ever to cross the NPL NSW Men's competition and he will be looked at in more ways than one this year.

Age will not weary club legend Paul Henderson who will don the number one jersey this year while club regulars, skipper Jason Madonis, Will Angel, Tom Whiteside and Niko Tsattalios will be putting in their heart and souls in recapturing their 2018 form.

There's been some key returns to the club with the likes of Mitchell Stamatellis, Troy Danaskos and Harris Gaitatzis all calling Belmore home once more while Michael Gaitatzis, will link up with his brother and will hope to bang in the goals after a successful 2018 NPL 3 NSW Men's season with the Gladesville Ryde Magic. Look for the return to fitness from injury of the talented Hagi Gligor who is tipped to turn some heads this year.

Their Sunday opponents the Sutherland Sharks come into their first-round match full of hope with new manager Terry Palapanis at the helm.

The Sharks fans will have every reason to be optimistic with a number of fresh new faces set to make a mark with the Shire based team.



Former Hakoah shotstopper Anthony Bouzanis is one of them set to make a big impact on the squad as well former A-League player and club captain Marc Warren. Add the two Spanish stars who destroyed the NPL 2 NSW Men's competition in Raul Beneit Romero and Juan Carlos Heras Romero as well as the youthful presence of Jeremy Cox up-front, you can be sure the Sharks will be ready for a big year.

One of Palapanis' former players whilst coaching at St George FC, Tarik Ercan will also be one to watch as he hopes he can cement his spot as one of the leading defenders in the NPL NSW Men's competition.

A big match up between two teams hoping to stamp their authority on the league early on.

Sunday 10th March

Hakoah Sydney City v Sydney FC

Hensley Athletic Field, 5pm kick-off

It will be an intriguing battle in Sydney's East as Hakoah Sydney City entertain Sydney FC in an interesting opening round clash.

Scottish legend Gavin Rae was dealt with some key losses during the off-season break but has managed to secure the likes of keeper Ryan Norval and Japanese import Shohei Okuno to bolster what will be a young squad. A number of the club's exciting young talents have been given first team contracts and will want to repay their manager's faith with some big