

ROUND 9 PREVIEW

NPL 3 NSW MEN'S

Buckle up for another entertaining weekend of football as we clock over into round 10 of the National Premier Leagues 3 NSW Men's competition. As we fast approach the halfway point of the season, a heavyweight clash between SD Raiders and Stanmore Hawks headlines this weekend's lot of fixtures.

SD Raiders FC - Stanmore Hawks FC..

A breathtaking contest will take centre stage at Ernie Smith Reserve as SD Raiders FC go head to head with Stanmore Hawks FC on Saturday night at 7pm.

Raiders have bounced back well since their shock thumping against Bankstown City in round six and have registered back to back 4-0 wins in their last two matches against Granville and Inter.

Depending on the result of their catch-up game against Rage on Wednesday night, Stanmore could arrive at Ernie Smith as league leaders.

The Hawks are the only side who boast an unbeaten record in the league, and they will need to replicate the kind of performance that saw them knock off high flying Gladesville Ryde Magic last Saturday.

Gladesville Ryde Magic and Hawkesbury City FC... wrap up round 10 when they meet at Christie Park No.1 on Sunday afternoon at 3pm.

Magic's form has faltered of late with two defeats from their last two away fixtures. Two late goals against Stanmore last Saturday was a cruel ending to what was a relatively even affair and they will be eager to return to the winner's circle this Sunday.

Hawkesbury have struggled to maintain their groove this season, finding it difficult to back up their performances week in, week out.

A win against Magic would prove a massive scalp for the Hawks however the hosts' record against opposition outside



the top five speaks for itself with all six of their victories coming against sides in the bottom half of the table.



Haliti returns to Wanderers

Foundation player and Asian Champions League winner Labinot Haliti has returned to Western Sydney Wanderers in an assistant coaching capacity.

Western Sydney foundation player Labinot Haliti plans on bringing passion and energy to the A-League club after his return to the Wanderers as an assistant coach.

Forward Haliti - who started in both legs of the Wanderers' 2014 Asian Champions League final success and played in every match of that successful campaign - has been head coach of the Newcastle's Y-League team since November 2018.

He spent three seasons with the Wanderers before he joined the Jets, where he finished his playing career

Haliti started coaching at Newcastle as a youth team assistant in 2017 before he graduated to the head role and earned a FIFA A Coaching Licence.

Haliti will work alongside Wanderers head coach Markus Babbel and assistant coach Jean-Paul de Marigny.

"I'm planning to bring a lot of passion and energy to the club," Haliti said.

"I know what it means to wear the badge and I'm looking to pass on that expectation to this group of Wanderers."

The club is in the process of overhauling its playing roster after missing out on the finals for a second-straight season,

Last Friday, the club announced the departure of 11 players, including four of their five imports.

On the same day, they announced defender Daniel Georgievski was joining from the Jets.

Haliti will lead the Newcastle's youth team for a further two weeks.

"I've spent a lot of time in Newcastle, since I first joined as a player back in 2005, so it's a city very close to my heart," said Haliti, who had three separate playing stints with the Jets.



Sydney FC out of Asian Champions League after squandered chances

A cheeky backheel goal has ended Sydney FC's Asian Champions League hopes, with the Sky Blues losing 1-0 away to South Korea's Ulsan Hyundai on Tuesday. The result left winless Sydney bottom of the four-team group with three points from five matches with one round to go. Sydney are three-points behind China's second-placed Shanghai SIPG, who win the tie-breaker with the Sky Blues, having scored more away goals in their two head-to-head games. **They will** now focus on Sunday's home A-League semi-final with old rivals Melbourne Victory.

It was the latest in a series of frustrating Champions League nights for Sydney, who have won just one of their last 15 matches in the competition.

As they did in most of their four previous games, Sydney had a good share of the match, but let points slip away by failing to take chances.

The sole goal of the game came in the 59th minute when American midfielder Mix Diskerud initiated a counter-attack with a flick and finished it with an equally clever and well-executed backheel.

Sydney had several chances to equalise with Iranian international Reza Ghoochannejhad lifting the ball over the Ulsan goalkeeper Oh Seung-Hoon in the 90th minute, but the weak shot was cleared just short off the line.

Even before that, Sydney were guilty of squandering good opportunities.

Five minutes after the goal, Anthony Caceres wasted a glorious chance, blasting a close range shot straight at Hoon, who knew little about the strike which crashed off his chin to safety.

Shortly after, substitute Daniel De Silva fired another shot straight at Hoon, who blocked the midfielder's attempt with his legs, Josh Brillante slammed a fierce effort just wide and Paulo Retre was off target with a header.

Recalled left back Michael Zullo was the creator of Sydney's three best chances in the first 50 minutes, swinging over some fine crosses.

Paulo Retre, Ghoochannejhad and Adam Le Fondre all failed to finish off Zullo's good work.

Ulsan enjoyed a good spell just before halftime, with a strong long range shot from Kim Bo-Kyung pushed away by Sydney goalkeeper Andrew Redmayne.

Redmayne saved Sydney again when he palmed away a fierce 57th minute shot from Park Joo-Ho, but could do nothing about the goal a couple of minutes later.

Daegu FC - Melbourne Victory 4-0