



By George Stavroulakis

ROUND 12 PREVIEW — NPL NSW

It's round 12 of the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's competition and we're past the halfway mark of the season.

Wollongong Wolves has gone the first 11 rounds as the only team to occupy first place and will start the second half of the campaign with a three point lead from second placed APIA Leichhardt Tigers. The battle for finals football is surely going to heat up over the final 11 rounds of the season with only seven points separating third and eighth. With the transfer window now open expect a number of new additions to add a little extra spice to the finals race.

This week's games kick off on Saturday night at Seymour Shaw Park as Sutherland Sharks host Sydney Olympic FC. Saturday night features three more fixtures with Sydney FC taking on Hakoah Sydney City East, Marconi Stallions going up against APIA Leichhardt Tigers and Blacktown City visiting Mt Druitt Town Rangers. Sunday features two matches with Wollongong Wolves travelling to Cromer Park to play Manly United, while Rockdale City Suns close out the round with a grudge match against rivals Sydney United 58.

Sutherland Sharks FC v Sydney Olympic FC, Saturday 6.30pm at Seymour Shaw Park

Sutherland Sharks will be hoping for a carbon copy of their round one win when they host Sydney Olympic at Seymour Shaw Park on Saturday.

It has been a bizarre run of form for the Sharks who are on a four game undefeated streak yet have not won a match in 11 weeks.

The Terry Palapanis coached side have taken points off Premiership favourites Wollongong Wolves and Rockdale City Suns during their past four games in hard earned draws, but it could've been very different had it not been for a few lapses in concentration.

The season ending injury to Anthony Bouzannis seems less damning after the shock return of club great Nathan Denham.

Denham showed he has lost little of his ability between the sticks during last week's draw with the Suns.

Palapanis hinted at a number of new additions to the squad this week with the transfer window opening so expect plenty of changes to the Sharks starting line-up.



NPL NSW 2019 Men's 1

Round 11 Results

APIA Tigers - Mt Druitt Rangers 3-2
Blacktown City - Hakoah Sydney 1-0
Manly United - Sydney United 3-0
Marconi Stallions - Wollongong Wolves 1-3
Sutherland Sharks - Rockdale City Suns 1-1
Sydney Olympic - Sydney FC Youth 2-3

Next Games Round 12 25.05.2019

Sutherland Sharks - Sydney Olympic
 Marconi Stallions - APIA Tigers
 Mt Druitt Rangers - Blacktown City
 Sydney FC Youth - Hakoah Sydney
26.05.2019
 Manly United - Wollongong Wolves
 Rockdale City Suns - Sydney United

Round 11 Table

| | Team | GP | Pts | W | D | L | GF | GA | +/- |
|----|--------------------|----|-----|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| 1 | Wollongong Wolves | 11 | 24 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 25 | 11 | 14 |
| 2 | APIA Tigers | 11 | 21 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 19 | 13 | 6 |
| 3 | Rockdale City Suns | 11 | 20 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 14 | -3 |
| 4 | Sydney United | 11 | 18 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 16 | 18 | -2 |
| 5 | Manly United | 11 | 17 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 16 | 12 | 4 |
| 6 | Blacktown City | 11 | 17 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 11 | -2 |
| 7 | Sydney Olympic | 11 | 15 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 22 | 18 | 4 |
| 8 | Marconi Stallions | 11 | 13 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 20 | 17 | 3 |
| 9 | Sydney FC Youth | 11 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 17 | 22 | -5 |
| 10 | Mt Druitt Rangers | 11 | 10 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 18 | 25 | -7 |
| 11 | Sutherland Sharks | 11 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 15 | -5 |
| 12 | Hakoah Sydney | 11 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 15 | -7 |

Their opponents Sydney Olympic will be determined to bounce back after a shock defeat to Sydney FC in Round 11.

The result last week was shock slump for Olympic who had seemingly rediscovered their form in recent weeks after an up and down start to the campaign.

Sitting just outside the top five in sixth position, Abbas Saad's side will need to turn over a new leaf in the second half of the season if they are to defend their premiership and championship titles. Once again their Spanish star import Alejandro (Alex) Sanchez continues to wow the fans with his elusive finishing and he will again be one of the key players that can unlock the Sharks defence.

Despite seven points separating Olympic and Sutherland on the ladder, this match is sure to be a tightly contested affair and if round 1's clash was anything to go by the result could very well be an upset.

Sydney FC v Hakoah Sydney City East, Saturday 7pm at Lambert Park

Back to back wins will be the order of the day when Sydney FC host Hakoah Sydney City East on Saturday at Lambert Park.

The Young Sky Blues pulled off a massive upset last week with a brilliant back to the

wall 3-2 win against Sydney Olympic and confidence is sure to be high for Jimmy van Weeren's side.

Another upside for van Weeren is the end of the A-League season which means he could be set to have rising stars Joel King and Luke Ivanovic more readily available over the second half of the campaign.

Both King and Ivanovic found themselves on the scoresheet last week and are only going to get better as the season goes on.

Ryan Teague was another impressive performer in last week's win and the holding midfielder will be expected to star against a struggling Hakoah attack.

It's been a tough run for Hakoah over the past two months with the Gavin Rae coached side finishing the first half of the season anchored to the bottom of the table with only two wins from 11 matches.

Their struggles finding the back of the net continued last round in a 1-0 loss to Blacktown City with Amaury Gauthier spurning a chance to equalise from the penalty spot.

The threat of relegation is becoming more and more real for Hakoah with the club needing a major turn around if they are to rescue their season.

Sydney FC will be favourites for this match at home but perhaps the second half of the season is the time Hakoah reignites their stuttering campaign.