



By George Stavroulakis

→ ROUND 16 REVIEW NPL 3 NSW MEN'S

We have a new leader! Stanmore Hawks FC return to the summit of the National Premier Leagues 3 Men's competition after playing second fiddle to Bankstown City FC for the past six rounds. The Hawks sit pretty at the top of the table, courtesy of Inter Lions victory against Bankstown City. Parramatta were able to snap out of their four-game winless streak while wins for Camden Tigers and Hawkesbury City has made for a very congested midtable with only a point the difference between 7th and 10th spot on the table. Arlington Oval was where this week's match of the round took place as Stanmore Hawks entertained Granville Rage on a freakishly cold Saturday night in the inner west.

Stanmore Hawks FC 3 Granville Rage 2

Stanmore Hawks pipped Granville Rage to the finish line, winning 3-2 in the end, in what was a tense finale to a heated contest at Arlington Oval on Saturday night. There was plenty drama on the pitch in this encounter after a late Rage comeback forced the Hawks to dig deep to score the winner, however it was the floodlights that were ultimately the centre of attention. It was the hosts who conjured up the first opportunity in this tie after Jovan Blagojevic's looping header went the wrong side of the post after he was picked out by Jonah Caragher's pinpoint ball. A much-improved Rage attack was on display this time around as Brandon Vegas and Jackson Warwick stretched the Hawks' defence with the former coming close on 13 minutes after his effort from the left-hand side of the box, stung the palms of Stanmore goalkeeper Nick Carosi.

However, it was the hosts who were able to get on the scoreboard first as Blagojevic capped off an excellent run down the left wing with a low driven effort which found its way into the bottom right hand corner of the net on 17 minutes. Three minutes later and they found themselves two up after a signature corner from Spaniard Alberto Perea Henche was headed into the goal by an airborne Conor Quilligan. We were soon rocked by the sudden descent into darkness after the floodlights switched off. With five

minutes remaining in the first half, Arlington Oval went pitch black which led to half time being pushed forward as players and spectators alike, waited for the lights to turn back on.

The whole fiasco lasted a total of 20 minutes and completely changed the complexion of the game when the players returned. Referee James Lewis played the remaining five minutes of the half and it was the Hawks who were unfortunate not to extend their lead to three goals after Peter Yannopoulos' effort rattled the crossbar after he was teed up by Blagojevic on the edge of the six-yard box.

For most of the second half, neither side were able to carve out any notable chances of their own and it was not until the final twenty minutes that the game well and truly came alive. Granville's Justin Ivanovic troubled Carosi with his effort on the 70th minute mark after he connected with Vegas' ball into the box before they got one back four minutes later thanks to Alan Lajin. Lajin bundled the ball over the line from point blank range after Carosi failed to deal with Warwick's stinging strike. It did not take much longer for the visitors to restore parity as Neram Yalda arrived on the scene on 78 minutes after he chipped it over Carosi who had come off his line in attempt to win the ball just outside the 18-yard-area.

However, all of Rage's hard work came undone from yet another Perea Henche corner, this time finding Blagojevic unmarked to head home the all-important winner with five minutes remaining. Defensive heroics from Hawks' Angus Chance, saved the home side in the final minute of the encounter after he sprinted back to make a spectacular goal line clearance to deny the visitors a share of the points. The win and subsequent three points moves the Hawks to 35 points, rising to the summit of the NPL 3 NSW Men's ladder.

STANMORE HAWKS FC 3 (Blagojevic 17', 85', Quilligan 20')

GRANVILLE RAGE 2 (Lajin 74', Yalda 78')

STANMORE HAWKS FC; 1.N.Carosi(gk), 2.T.Wohlfiel, 3.O.Stickland, 5.H.Brown, 6.A.Perea Henche, 7.P.Yannopoulos, 8.N.Niski(12.S.Awad 79'), 9.J.Blagojevic, 10.J.Caragher(17.A.Caragher 81'), 11.C.Quilligan, 16.A.Chance.

Substitutions Not Used – 15.J.Seib, 21.F.Worrall, 31.D.Vaccaro.

Yellow Cards – 17.A.Caragher 87', 7.P.Yannopoulos 90+4'.



Ultra Football Round 16 Team of the Week: Age is only just a number, just ask 36-year-old APIA Leichhardt Tigers FC maestro Franco Parisi who singly handily carved up the Rockdale City Suns defence on Sunday scoring two fantastic solo goals putting him amongst the best of the 11 this week. Joining him on the list was teammates Chris Payne who continues to bang in the goals consistently while league leaders Wollongong Wolves Football Club had two of their own stars shine with Lachlan Scott and Taylor McDonald the pick of the bunch. Blacktown City FC paved way for two players as well with Manny Gonzalez and Yianni Spyraakis catching the eye of our journalists while Sutherland Sharks FC's Jordan Morfitis and Mount Druitt Town Rangers FC's star Fabricio Fernandez also received top honours. Sydney United 58 FC had Adrian Vlastelica as the star of his side's 1-1 draw on the weekend while Marconi Stallions FC keeper Nenad Vekic was a busy shotstopper, albeit in a losing side, kept his side in the match in their shock 1-0 loss to Hakoah. Speaking of Hakoah Sydney City East FC, Joshua Swadling made his debut appearance in the line-up after a classy display in midfield.

Mark Bridge surprises fan

It's not everyday a young promising footballer gets a visit from one of his favourite Australian players for their ninth birthday, but one boy saw his dream turn into a reality on Saturday at Sydney Olympic Park.

The lucky birthday boy, APIA Leichhardt Tigers' SAP under 9's Oscar Spresian asked that his wish was to see former Western Sydney Wanderer and now National Premier Leagues 2 NSW Men's Mounties Wanderers star Mark Bridge in the flesh.

Through some close contacts, Bridge made young Oscar's dream come true, surprising him and his little guests at his birthday party at a football pitch in Sydney Olympic Park on

Saturday morning.

Much to young Oscar's delight upon seeing his hero, the Mounties Wanderers star also gifted him with one of his Western Sydney Wanderers playing jerseys as a birthday present that only put a further smile on the youngsters face.

If that wasn't enough, Bridge then took young Oscar and his friends through a few football drills, posed for photos as part of his birthday gift, a moment and memory the young footballer will never forget.

Well done to Mark Bridge for making this dream for Oscar come true, a consummate professional and all round nice guy!

