

nsw



By George Stavroulakis

NPL NSW Men's Championship Series Explained

Football NSW has announced the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's Championship Series Fixtures with the business end of the season kicking into gear. With the Grand Final set for Saturday August 31st at Bankwest Stadium, below is the Finals Series structure that will take shape prior to the big finale for the 18s, 20s and First Grade.



WEEK 1

Saturday, 17 August 2019

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|
| M1 | Elimination Semi Finals (4v5) | U18's |
| M1 | Elimination Semi Finals (4v5) | U20's |
| M2 | Elimination Semi Finals (4v5) | 1st Grade |

Saturday, 17 August 2019

| | | |
|----|------------------------------|-----------|
| M2 | Preliminary Semi Final (2v3) | U18's |
| M2 | Preliminary Semi Final (2v3) | U20's |
| M1 | Preliminary Semi Final (2v3) | 1st Grade |

WEEK 2

Wednesday, 21 August 2019

| | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| M4 | Minor Semi Final (Loser M1v Winner M2) | U18's |
| M4 | Minor Semi Final (Loser M1v Winner M2) | U20's |
| M4 | Minor Semi Final (Loser M1v Winner M2) | 1st Grade |

Wednesday, 21 August 2019

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-----------|
| M3 | Major Semi Final (1 v Winner M1) | U18's |
| M3 | Major Semi Final (1 v Winner M1) | U20's |
| M3 | Major Semi Final (1 v Winner M1) | 1st Grade |

WEEK 3

Sunday, 25 August 2019

| | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| M5 | Preliminary Final (Loser M3 v Winner M4) | U18's |
| M5 | Preliminary Final (Loser M3 v Winner M4) | U20's |
| M5 | Preliminary Final (Loser M3 v Winner M4) | 1st Grade |

WEEK 4

Saturday, 31 August 2019

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| M6 | Grand Final (Winner M3 v Winner M5) | U18's |
| M6 | Grand Final (Winner M3 v Winner M5) | U20's |
| M6 | Grand Final (Winner M3 v Winner M5) | 1st Grade |

Mallia's Maltese heartbreak despite 2018 call up

Livewire striker Mitch Mallia's hopes of representing Malta appear dashed with the former A-League attacker saying his eligibility still remains in limbo despite his call up 15 months ago.

Mallia, a lightning-quick former Sydney FC and Perth Glory forward, has been on the Malta national team radar since he burst on the A-League scene in 2011.

And after two selections in the NPL team of the year in 2015 and '16, the striker was granted Maltese citizenship and duly called up for internationals against Luxembourg and Finland in March 2018.

Mallia, currently playing for Marconi in the NSW NPL, was set to follow in the footsteps of John Hutchinson, the former Central Coast Mariners legend, and Manny Muscat of Melbourne City and Phoenix, in playing for the country of his family's heritage.

However, agonisingly, an appearance for the Olyroos may have dashed his international dreams forever.

"I got my call up to the Maltese national team last year but I didn't receive my clearance from FIFA," Mallia told FTBL today. **"I'm not** too sure if we'll have any luck

because I played for the Olyroos. It would've been amazing. But there's no use worrying about it.

"We didn't get a positive response from FIFA in that regard. For me, it's a lost cause but if in the future they change the rules, you never know.

"For now, though, it'll be tough."

Mallia isn't dwelling.

First, there's the prospect of playing in the Waratah Cup Final against local rivals Sydney United after Marconi's 2-0 win over Manly last night.

And second, potentially playing at the 30,000-seat Bankwest Stadium, home to Western Sydney Wanderers.

This week the updated Wanderland was unveiled as host of NPL NSW Grand Final on August 31 and Mallia is hoping Marconi can make a late-season charge and play at a stadium he says is next level.

"Wow, what a stadium. It's going to be one



of the best in the country, Mallia said. It's got that proper football feel to it. What a first-class venue for the Grand Final.

With an FFA Cup Round of 32 interstate flight coming up, it's another experience to enjoy, though in slightly less flashy circumstances than Bankwest.

Mallia has been part of an unforgettable Blacktown Demons FFA Cup run in recent years and he hopes to replicate that in

Tasmania when the Stallions meet South Hobart in this year's Round of 32.

"The boys are looking forward to an away trip, even if it's going to be very, very cold!" he said, adding it will be very difficult away from home against the Tassie outfit.

An ankle break last year stymied Mallia's progress with the attacker missing much of the NPL pre-season.

But he's barely stopped, battling back to fitness and launching his own striker's academy in Sydney's West.

Teaching many of the techniques he picked up from being a teammate of Alessandro Del Piero at Sydney FC, Mallia says it's been an eye-opener teaching kids the art of goalscoring. It's called Final Third Football (<http://www.ftfootball.com.au>).

He added: "We teach striking skills only. We teach them how to score goals. Sometimes with just a little guidance kids can go a long way."