



By George Stavroulakis

ROBERTO AND GIORGIO SPERANZA

This year's TAFE NSW Waratah Cup final will be a family affair when Marconi Stallions' defensive duo Roberto and Giorgio Speranza take to Lily Holmes Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

Giorgio, 28, and Roberto, 26, have become household names in the National Premier Leagues Men's competition during recent years, spending the majority of their careers playing alongside each other at left-back and centre-back respectively.

After a successful three-year stint together at Blacktown City, the brothers decided to make the shift to Marconi prior to the 2019 season.

The decision has immediately paid dividends with a cup final appearance at the first possible opportunity.

The Speranza's last tasted silverware back in 2016 when Blacktown City triumphed over Sydney United 58 in the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's Grand Final, and Giorgio is eagerly anticipating a shot at lifting another trophy against the same opposition.

"I'm absolutely buzzing," he revealed.

"No matter how old you get, being involved in big games is what you play for, and there are no bigger games than Finals.

"We have many friends and family who are super keen to come and support us on the weekend so there is no doubt everyone

is excited."

Both brothers are relishing the opportunity to line up together with a shot at securing what would be their second shared major honour.

"I've said it many times before but it's a privilege to have the opportunity to, not only play alongside my brother on the pitch, but also win trophies and silverware together," Giorgio said.

"Rewind the clock to 20 years ago, and we are playing with a soccer ball together in the backyard at home, and it still feels the same, except it's just on a much bigger scale now."

"We've tried to keep most of our career playing next to each other because we want to achieve what we do together," Roberto added.

"It makes it all that much sweeter."

Interestingly, Giorgio will experience a strong sense of déjà vu as he takes to the Lily Holmes Stadium paddock this weekend.

Back in 2010, the elder brother was a member of Marconi's last cup winning outfit who defeated Spirit FC 7-6 on



penalties at the same venue.

"It's amazing how fast time goes but I was lucky enough to play a Waratah Cup final in my first year of playing 1st grade," Speranza reflected.

"Being 18 years of age, I was very nervous leading up to the game and looked up to the senior players, in particular the captain at the time, Nahuel Arrarte.

"On Sunday, it will be my turn to lead by example for the younger players and hopefully guide them to a Cup Final win."

The Speranza's were two of the host of established NPL NSW Men's talent who joined the Stallions this campaign, and Roberto is confident that Peter Tsekenis has constructed a roster capable of ongoing success.

"It was a group decision to decide that we still want to play together and continue to win things together," he revealed.

"I think we have enough big-game players and experienced individuals who can all be consistent, disciplined at the right times and produce some magical moments.

"It's a chance for us to win a trophy but it's also the chance for us to set the tone for the rest of the season and really go on a winning roll, heading into the finals.

"We want to make the finals and really give it a good shake-up.

"I think we're starting to hit our straps at the right time and if we continue on, starting this weekend, we will continue to be a force to be reckoned with."

Katie Patterson to referee TAFE NSW Waratah Cup Final



One of New South Wales' leading female officials Katie Patterson will this Sunday officiate the 2019 TAFE NSW Waratah Cup Final clash between the Marconi Stallions and Sydney United 58 to be held at Lily Homes Stadium (2:30pm kick-off).

The 29-year-old, who has been a regular fixture officiating in the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's and Women's top tier competitions in recent seasons as well as the Hyundai A-League and W-League, will be at the forefront at Lily Homes Stadium leading the charge in running the grand finale.

Patterson rose to fame in September 2015 when she became the first female referee to officiate an A-League team in a competitive match when she took charge of the FFA Cup tie between Rockdale City Suns and Melbourne Victory at Jubilee Oval.

Having commenced her refereeing career in the Illawarra before moving to the St George Referees Association as well as the NSW State League Football Referees Branch, Patterson will be eagerly looking forward to what will be a high quality match between two evenly matched teams.

Patterson will be assisted on Sunday by leading Football NSW assistant-referees Joon Park and Scott Edeling with Stephen Lucas announced as the fourth official.

ROUND 19 PREVIEW-NPL 3 NSW MEN'S

The National Premier Leagues 3 NSW Men's competition continues on its merry way this weekend, with all seven matches of Round Nineteen scheduled across five different timeslots on Saturday.

It's 'last' versus 'first' in Bathurst on Saturday, as the Western NSW Mariners face up to league leaders, the Stanmore Hawks, at Proctor Park for a 5pm kick off.

On paper, can anyone see anything other than a comprehensive Stanmore win? The Hawks are flying high on the back of five wins and two draws in their past seven matches, and will be out to make it a worthwhile trip to Bathurst by bringing home the bacon. But football can be a funny game, and they do say the ball is round.... the Mariners can throw caution to the wind knowing they are clear underdogs with nothing to lose. Stanmore won the corresponding first round encounter back in April by 6-1, with hatricks to both Peter Yannopoulos and Sam Awad, and it'll be difficult to predict anything other than a similar outcome this time around.

Both Camden Tigers and Gladesville Ryde Magic will be on the rebound on Saturday when they meet at 7pm at Ron Dine Stadium.

Occupying 10th spot on 21 points, Camden's form has been up and down of late, with the team unable to gain any sort of momentum. But the Tigers do enjoy playing on their home patch, and have had five wins and just the one loss in six outings in Camden. In fact, this match will start a run of seven consecutive games at Ron Dine Stadium, which could very well mean a climb up the competition ladder for the Camden faithful. Last week's reverse against Bankstown United was the first in nine rounds for Gladesville Ryde Magic, but such has been the positive form of other clubs near the top, it meant they dropped in to 3rd spot as a result. Lachlan Harte and Aaron Khan got the goals in Gladesville's 2-1 first round win back in April, and the Magic will hope for another three points here if they are to stay in touch with the top two.