



By George Stavroulakis

ROUND 24 PREVIEW – NPL 3 NSW MEN'S

The countdown for finals football is inching closer and closer as we give a rundown of all the fixtures coming your way ahead of round 24 of the National Premier Leagues 3 NSW competition.

All eyes will be on Stanmore Hawks FC and Bankstown City FC when they go head to head at Arlington Oval on Saturday night at 7pm.

With just three rounds of the regular season remaining, this top of the table tie could determine who is crowned this season's premiers.

A win for Stanmore will see push them five points clear of Bankstown, whilst all three points for the visitors means that we will have new league leaders for the first time in two months.

The Lions dished out the Hawks' first defeat of the campaign the last time they met, with a 2-1 triumph at Jensen Park. They will be hoping that history repeats itself this weekend as they look to reclaim top spot.

Gladesville Ryde Magic wrap up the weekend's set of fixtures when they face off against Dunbar Rovers FC at Christie Park at 4pm on Sunday afternoon.

Magic's Zoran Kolundzic last minute equaliser saved his side from the jaws of defeat away to Hawkesbury last weekend and means that they enter this match on a three-match unbeaten run.

The last time the hosts played out of Christie Park, a fortnight ago, they upset Stanmore by dishing out only the second loss all season to the league leaders.



Back to back defeats against fellow finals challengers Dully and United have effectively ruined any chances of Dunbar creeping into the top six.

The eastern suburbs outfit were held goalless in both defeats and conceded a worrying six goals throughout the two encounters.

The last time these two teams met at Hensley Athletic Field, it ended all square with 1-1 the full time score back in round 11.

DAMIAN TSEKENIS IS THE PRODUCT OF A MARCONI STALLIONS MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

With father and ex-National Soccer League stalwart Peter Tsekenis in the dugout, this father and son combination are aiming to send Hyundai A-League giants Melbourne City packing from the FFA Cup 2019.

Eliminating City in the Round of 16 next Wednesday would be the crowning moment of an unbelievable year for a family that are helping drag one of Australian football's household names back to the top.

18-year-old striker Damian has enjoyed a barnstorming rise through every senior grade in 2019, highlighted by scoring the third and final goal in Marconi's 3-0 rout of South Hobart in the Round of 32.

His father, a former Australian U-23 international, says even he's been surprised by his teenage son's rapid rise.

"When the opportunity came to give him a chance in first grade I hesitated, because he's my boy," said Peter.

"That has always been hard on him, but he doesn't care. He plays without any pressure or fear, and some of the things he does...they are things that I can't coach."

"The goal for this year was to maybe push for a bench spot on the U20s," admits Damian.

"Everything has been unexpected, but that's football...you just never know."

However, as much as he would love to take credit for his son's development, Tsekenis senior revealed that the plaudits belong to wife Denise, a former striker for the Australian schoolgirls.

"Damian has got my mongrel, if you like, but he's got the attacking flair of his Mum," said Peter, who took no prisoners as a bruising central defender for the likes of Sydney Olympic and Newcastle United in the National Soccer League.

It appears his offspring has received the best of both worlds.

"I've seen videos of my Dad...he was more of a number six who just smacked players," says Damian.

"I've always had an eye for goal and my Mum loved me for it!"

Peter Tsekenis was a tough-tackling defender for the likes of Sydney Olympic and Newcastle United

All three Tsekenis family members will be in attendance when Marconi welcome Erick Mombaerts' Melbourne City side to Bossley Park in next Wednesday's FFA Cup 2019 Round of 16 tie.

It is the first time the Stallions have made the Round of 16 stage and a marker of the progress the four-time National Soccer League winners have made since Tsekenis senior was appointed coach in 2017.

Marconi were crowned Waratah Cup champions in July after beating Sydney United 58, the team they will face again this Saturday in a do-or-die NPL NSW Elimination Final, before turning their eye toward Wednesday's clash with City.

"It's been a hard slog. I'm happy with where we are at the moment, but a club like Marconi always should be competing for trophies," says Peter.

"We're almost there and I'm very confident going forward that there's better days."

