

FRAGOGIANNIS PREPARES FOR BATTLE AGAINST FORMER CLUB

Yianni Fragogiannis is looking to lead Sydney United 58 through a do-or-die clash with his former club Blacktown City FC on Wednesday night.

Miro Vlastelica's outfit edged their way past a stubborn Marconi Stallions side on Saturday, triumphing 2-0 thanks to Patrick Antelmi's brace in extra time.

They are now preparing for a midweek trip to Lily Holmes Stadium, where they will lock horns with Blacktown City in the Minor Semi Final.

Despite displaying hot-and-cold form throughout the regular season, Fragogiannis is quietly confident his side have what it takes to continue progressing on the road to the Grand Final at Bankwest Stadium on August 31st.

"We've had a pretty inconsistent season

across the board, but we knew that if we get into the top five, anything after that is a different proposition," the defender said.

"In the one-off games of finals football, we back ourselves to beat anyone in the competition.

"The game (vs Marconi) probably wasn't our best performance but I think from the second half and extra time we deserved to win."

Fragogiannis donned the captain armband on Saturday night, as a member of United 58's new leadership group established since the mid-season departure of club captain Nick Stavroulakis to APIA Leichhardt.



"Since the departure of Nick Stavroulakis, the responsibility has been shared by a few of the boys, and I think that's a good thing. "We are all trying to push on the younger boys and lead by example both on and off the field.

"I had three good years under Critto and only have good things to say about the job that he has done.

"It goes to show this season that everyone wrote them off and they still managed to finish in the top three.

"But we definitely back ourselves to beat anyone on any given day, and that will be the focus come Wednesday night."

The defender will line up against a familiar foe on Wednesday night, having made the move from Blacktown to United 58 himself back in 2016.

"I'm a senior player as a part of the Sydney United set-up now," Fragogiannis said.



Arnie: We need a second division

Socceroos coach Graham Arnold says a national reserves competition or second division is vital to fill a vacuum of opportunity for emerging players.

Arnold says Australian footballers aged between 17 and 22 suffer from a lack of chances to develop in a professional environment.

PASFIELD CONFIDENT OF GRAND FINAL SPOT

The 2019 National Premier Leagues NSW Men's Premiers Wollongong Wolves are just 90 minutes away from the Championship decider, and their skipper Justin Pasfield is confident his side are well prepared to finish the job.

Luke Wilkshire's men enjoyed the weekend off as it was determined that APIA Leichhardt would be the Wolves' next assignment, after they trounced Blacktown in a dramatic penalty shootout.

Wollongong skipper Pasfield, who is one of the few remaining members from the club's last Grand Final winning side back in 2008, assured that his teammates will be raring to go come Wednesday night.

"Our preparation has been the same as it has been all year," he revealed.

"We made sure to emphasise that this is just another game, and we're not putting any more priority on it than we usually do every week.

"The boys are looking forward to it, we're ready to go."

Wollongong have recently had the edge

over Wednesday's opponents, scoring a combined seven goals whilst keeping two clean sheets in their previous meetings this season.

However Pasfield revealed the Wolves are this week treating APIA as an entirely new prospect.

"We've played APIA twice this year and done pretty well against them but in saying that the gears go up a couple of notches when you're playing semi-final football.

"We expect them to come down here with a lot of effort and hard running.

"They've got some great players and are a good team, they wouldn't be in the position they are in if they weren't.

"We will give them the respect that they deserve but also be on our toes and make sure we are doing all the right things."

