



the final day of round 22 matches, scoring 22 goals, one more than his nearest rival in APIA Leichhardt Tigers' Chris Payne.

It was onto the NPL NSW Men's 'Goal of the Year' award and after 22 rounds there was only one clear winner. In what was a stunning year for goals it came from an unlikely source, Wollongong Wolves defender Nikola Djordjevic for his outrageous 'scorpion' goal that went viral against the Sutherland Sharks in round 8 of the competition. It was to be the second successive year Football NSW's Goal of the Year would be in the form of a scorpion kick after Sydney Olympic defender Thomas Whiteside took it out in 2018.

The Coach of the Year category was next with Northern Tigers' NPL NSW Women's manager Jason Eagar getting the nod from his fellow peers. It was a great year for Eagar and his team after guiding his side to the finals series, just missing out on silverware at the big dance. Wollongong Wolves' well known and travelled coach Luke Wilkshire took out the male category after a huge season clinching the Premiership. In his debut season as a head coach, Wilkshire used all his experience as a former Soccerroo that spearheaded his side with not only a Premiership but winning a passage to the 2019 NPL Finals Series representing NSW with the opportunity to be crowned the Champion NPL club across Australia.

The time had come for the Player of the Year awards in what was the crucial part of the evening as the suspense was at boiling point for all players involved.

Once again, the clubs voted in a 3-2-1 system after each team put forward their best two players for the 2019 season.

Things were tight in the NPL NSW Women's category however it was Bankstown City's Vesna Milivojevic who was quite simply outstanding and a shining light in what was an otherwise tough year for the club. Although finishing tenth on the overall ladder, Milivojevic was the heart and soul of the Bankstown squad, scoring goals on cue as well as providing them for her fellow teammates.

The stage was set for the final award of the evening and that was the prestigious NPL NSW Men's award for 2019, the Gold Medal.

After 22 rounds the award was presented to Wollongong Wolves' Thomas James, who collected his second award of the evening.

James was outstanding in his debut NPL NSW Men's season after being plucked from the ACT Premier League, he paid back the faith coach Luke Wilkshire had in him with a fine season.

Scoring goals was his main attribute but his work ethic and willingness to win at all costs was also another quality James possessed in what was a huge season for the Lincolnshire lad.

James beat the likes of APIA Leichhardt Tigers' Franco Parisi, Mt Druitt Town Rangers Fabricio Fernandes and Marconi's Marko Jesic for the big prize and was truly humbled to have won such an accolade.

➤ 2019 Premier Leagues Award Winners on page 42 ➤



**THE 'DEBBIE TAIT' AWARD FOR THE NPL NSW WOMEN'S GOLDEN BOOT WAS AWARDED TO SYDNEY OLYMPIC'S STARLET AND YOUNG MATILDA SUSAN PHONSONGKHAM WHO SCORED 20 GOALS FOR THE YEAR.**