



By George Stavroulakis

# NPL 3 NSW MEN'S GRAND FINAL PREVIEW 2019

The blockbuster fixture of the 2019 National Premier Leagues 3 NSW Men's competition is only a few sleeps away. All the passion and excitement that has built up over the course of the season will take centre stage come Saturday as two heavyweights in Stanmore Hawks FC and SD Raiders FC go toe to toe in the Grand Final.

**Let's examine the two outfits to see what we can expect from the highly anticipated Grand Final at Ilinden Sports Centre on Saturday.**

## STANMORE HAWKS FC – SD RAIDERS FC Ilinden Sports Centre, Rockdale Saturday, September 21 @ 5pm

**After 6** months of entertaining football, the 2019 National Premier Leagues 3 NSW Men's competition wraps up in style on Saturday when Stanmore Hawks face off against SD Raiders for the Championship trophy in this season's Grand Final.

**Stanmore Hawks** have been the club to watch, the inner west outfit have already secured the Premiership and will look to add a second trophy to their cabinet this season come Saturday.

**Raiders will** also be out to add to what already has been a remarkable campaign for the club. They have claimed the Club Championship and can look forward to NPL 2 football next season. A Championship trophy would be an appropriate parting gift for Nicky Carle's men.

**Both sides** were able to rest in the first week of the finals, Hawks returned to action last Saturday, defeating Gladesville Ryde Magic 3-1 after extra time in their semi final, whilst Southern Districts completed a 4-0 rout over Bankstown City in their crunch encounter.

**The attacking** trio of Jovan Blagojevic, Peter Yannopoulos and Conor Quilligan have been integral to the Hawks' spectacular season, together they have combined to score 55 out of their side's 72 goals.

**Jonah Caragher** has also been in fine form of late, the lightning quick winger has scored in each his side's last three fixtures.

**The defensive** efforts of Stanmore are also a large reason behind their success this campaign. The Premiership holders boasted the tightest defence in the competition over the regular season, having only conceded on 27 occasions. That fantastic achievement can be attributed to the tireless work of defensive mainstays Sam Awad, Ollie Stickland, Tim Wohlfiel and Angus Chance, whilst Nick Carosi has had an outstanding season between the sticks -The Hawks shot stopper kept a league high of nine clean sheets.

**Raiders have** earned their spot in this weekend's decider after hitting form at the back of end of the regular campaign.

**Nicky Carle's** side had to bide their time in 3rd and 4th spot on the table for most of the season, they only clinched their 2nd placed finish on the final matchday



when they leapfrogged rivals Bankstown City after playing second fiddle to the Lions for the final quarter or so of the campaign.

**Raiders finished** the campaign with three wins on the bounce before performing a demolition job on Bankstown in last week's Semi Final to book their place in the Grand Final.

**James Raiti** and Shaun Irwin were faultless in defence over the course of that victory, the two centre backs nullified Bankstown's attacking threat, that is no mean feat considering that the opposition had Golden Boot winner Nikola Todoroski and star striker Ante Tomic in their ranks.

**The loss** of star player Sebastian Malfara to injury early in the season left a huge void for the Raiders in the attacking third. Young gun Charlie Abou Serhal has seamlessly stepped into the role since his arrival, he has scored three goals in nine appearances.

**Anthony Proia** has been as reliable as ever up front; he has scored 27 goals to date. However, teammates have also helped to ease the goal scoring burden on the target man, with fellow striker Ben Welch weighing in with 12 goals whilst Daniel Bittar has struck six times over the course of the season.

**Stanmore got** the better of Raiders in both their meeting this season, holding onto secure a 4-3 win at Ernie Smith Reserve despite going down to 10 men before they dispatched of them 2-0 at Arlington just

over a month ago.

**However, Raiders'** long-awaited triumph over Bankstown last weekend proved that form may not necessarily be the best indicator, especially when it comes to predicting the unlikely nature of finals football.

**This Saturday** will mark the final act of the 2019 National Premier Leagues 3 NSW Men's competition – will Premiers Stanmore Hawks get the job done and tie up the Championship Trophy, or can SD Raiders add to their promotion celebrations by securing silverware in their last fixture in this competition?

**Head to Head** in 2019;

**RD 10** on May 11th @ Ernie Smith Reserve

**SD Raiders** FC 3 (Bittar x2, Marjanovic)

**Stanmore Hawks** FC 4 (Blagojevic, Yannopoulos x2, Awad)

**RD 23** on August 10th @ Arlington Oval

**Stanmore Hawks** FC 2 (Blagojevic, Quilligan)

**SD Raiders** FC 0

**Peter Triantis** provided plenty of drive from central midfield, and he also laid on the key pass for Jeffrey's goal. Tai Smith and Mitchell Davidson will be looking to cause havoc in wide areas – they'll be supported by fullbacks Joshua Viera and Michael Cklamovski.

**As mentioned** earlier, Mitchell Smith is yet to find the net against Mounties in 2019, so what can Jacob Poscoliero and Benjamin Spruce do to keep it that way? Whatever happens, Blake Tuxford still needs to command his penalty area with authority, something the former APIA Leichhardt shotstopper has been doing since joining Mounties.

**No matter** who he selects, Mounties coach Brian Brown will also have attacking quality on the bench. Last week it was Matthew West and Bruno Pivato, but another substitute in Anthony Schmidt ended up grabbing their late winner – what a time to score your first goal of the campaign!



**ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΗΣ:**  
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>Μάνος Χατζηδάμης

**ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΣ ΠΑΡΑΓΩΓΗΣ:**  
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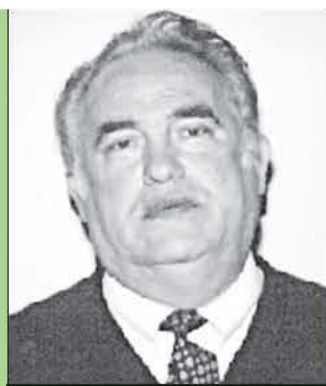
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