



By George Stavroulakis

NIKAS REVEALS FRUSTRATION WITH LATEST INJURY



PANNI NIKAS ACCEPTED THE NEW CHALLENGE OF SIGNING ON WITH NORTH SHORE MARINERS FOR THE 2020 NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES NSW MEN'S TOP TIER CAMPAIGN BUT WAS DEALT A MAJOR BLOW AFTER SUFFERING A FREAK PRE-SEASON FACIAL INJURY IN A MATCH AGAINST SYDNEY OLYMPIC AT VALENTINE SPORTS PARK.



"It was an unfortunate accident against Sydney Olympic in a pre-season fixture, a fractured cheek bone but what has happened with players in the past with this type of injury it's a small hiccup.

"Hopefully, if all goes well I'm looking at maybe a few weeks out so hopefully, I'll be back in contention around Rounds 3 or 4 and get my season started.

"I'll start back in training this week but just be a little cautious of course."

Asked what he thought about his time thus far since coming from the Rockdale City Suns, Nikas replied.

"First and foremost the coach (Joe Hayward), is first class, one of the best guys I've worked with.

"He's doing a magnificent job with the club and team along with his assistants and the boys are great as well.

"They have a winning culture having come through from the lower leagues to NPL1 and that creates a healthy environment within the playing group."

The culture at the club, one of enthusiasm, has stood the side in good stead during pre-season.

"Against the established NPL NSW Men's sides we've played in pre-season, we are starting to understand where we have to be and the intensity at training over the past few weeks has certainly increased.

"We are under no illusions and appreciate the standard we need to be at to compete at this level and it's improving all the time and we know we are capable of giving any side a good game on the day but we'll concentrate on our game and what we can do.

"We are in a position whereby the other clubs don't

really know us so we'll go into every game as the underdog and that can always be turned into an asset of course and one which, hopefully, we can exploit to the fullest.

"We realise it is going to be a difficult season, the step up to NPL1 cannot be taken lightly but we have belief in our squad and the infrastructure behind us and as the days tick by the excitement is building and we are looking forward as a unit to getting out there and competing with the best sides NSW offer.

"It will be a steep learning curve for us as a team but a challenge we are all looking forward to."

North Shore Mariners start their campaign against 2019 Champions APIA Leichhardt Tigers at Lambert Park on Saturday 29th of February at 6pm.