



By George Stavroulakis

# 2020 NPL NSW MEN'S SEASON PREVIEW

**- The time has come yet again as Australia's Premier National Premier Leagues competition, the NPL NSW Men's kick's off this weekend with 12 clubs set to go head to head in the pursuit of the Premiership and Championship trophy.**

The reigning NPL Champions Wollongong Wolves will hope to defend its Premiership as Luke Wilshire prepares for his assault on the league while the APIA Leichhardt Tigers are hoping they can continue on with winning silverware after clinching last year's dramatic Grand Final trophy.

Former NSL giants Sydney Olympic, Sydney United 58 and Marconi Stallions will once again be pushing themselves to the limit in rediscovering their winning formulas with the hope of landing the big jackpot come September while the likes of the Rockdale Illinden FC, Manly United, Sutherland Sharks, Blacktown City, Mt Druitt Town Rangers and Sydney FC will be on hand to ruffle a few feathers – and you never know, this list may boost the next Champion.

North Shore Mariners will be the new kids on the block looking at making a statement but one thing's for sure, the 2020 NPL NSW Men's competition will be one of the fiercest seasons yet.

Here's a breakdown on what to expect from each club.

## APIA LEICHHARDT FC

**Coach:** John Calleja

**2019 finish:** Second (Grand Final winners)

**Major signings:** Jeremy Cox, Patrick Scibilio, Mitchell Gibbs, Gavin De Niese

**Star of the Future:** Dom Nasrabadi

**Player to Watch out for:** Sean Symons

**Third time** was a charm for APIA Leichhardt in 2019 with the NPL NSW Men's powerhouse shaking the monkey off their back to claim long awaited grand final success.

**As the** reigning champions they will be a target for every other team in the competition and the pressure will be on coach John Calleja to keep his side performing at such a high level.

**APIA have** brought in former Sutherland Sharks and Sydney FC Youth striker Jeremy Cox as well as his former Sky Blues teammate Patrick Scibilio this season to add some young blood into what is an ageing squad.

**However, APIA** will once again rely on the same spine of stars including the Symons brothers, Club hero Franco Parisi, Adrian Uchino and Ivan Necevski to get the job done in 2020.

**The club** has also moved quickly to appoint veteran player Nick Stavroulakis as the the assistant to Calleja while former South Melbourne midfielder Gavin De Niese has also put pen to paper at the Inner West club.

**APIA Leichhardt** Tigers 2020: Sean Symons, Josh Symons, Franco Parisi, Nick Stavroulakis, Ivan Necevski, Luke Turnbull, Themba Muata Marlow, Paul Galimi, Adrian Uchino, Corey Biczo, Michael Kouta, Chris Payne, Lachlan Hughes, Dom Nasrabadi, Mitchell Gibbs, Patrick Scibilio, Jeremy Cox, Camil Abouchaya, Nick Azzzone, Gavin De Niese

## BLACKTOWN CITY FC

**Coach:** Mark Crittenden

**2019 finish:** Third

**Major signings:** Hassan Jalloh

**Star of the Future:** Suley Bangura

**Player to Watch out for:** Grant Lynch

**Blacktown City** has flown under the radar this offseason but don't expect them to fall off in season 2020.

**Season 2019** was supposed to be a major fall from grace for the club from Lily Homes Stadium after the departure of more than half of their squad. Instead they remained a finals contender with a team of young determined stars led by renowned head coach Mark Crittenden.

**Crittenden will** be looking to use the same formula again this time around so don't be surprised to see this team in action come finals time.

**The club** were dealt with a huge blow prior to the season kicking off losing the inspirational Joey Gibbs who has since signed a professional deal in Iceland. Light on depth, the club's quality youth products will be put to the test as the NPL NSW Men's will surely see more quality youngsters unearthed at Lily Homes Stadium in 2020.

**Blacktown City** 2020: Alen Aganovic, Daniel Araujo, Dakota Askew, Jackson Bandiera, Suley Bangura, Adam Berry, Daniel Bragg, Lachlan Campbell, Daniel Collins, Rhett De Silva, Carlos De Oliveira, Leroy Jennings, Matthew Lewis, Grant Lynch, Will Mutch, Dylan Niski, Tristan Prendergast, Yianni Spyrikis

## MARCONI STALLIONS

**Coach:** Peter Tsekenis

**2019 finish:** Fifth

**Major signings:** Lachlan Roberts, Dion Shaw, Mark Rodic, Anthony Costa

**Star of the Future:** Lachlan Sepping

**Player to Watch out for:** Martin Fernandez

**Consistency will** be the key for Marconi Stallions in 2020 as they look to break into the finals for the first time since returning to the NSW top flight.

**Despite boasting** a star-studded squad, The Stallions paid the price for ill-disciplined play last season as they narrowly missed the finals.



**They have** re-signed the majority of their squad and have the look of title contenders if they can get it all together on the pitch.

**One player** to watch out for will be former Adelaide City gun Anthony Costa. The South Australian is hoping that he can replicate his form he produced with City at the 'Palace'.

**Marconi Stallions** 2020: Lachlan Roberts, Liam Youlley, Marko Jesic, Martin Fernandez, Nenad Vekic, Brandon Vella, James Andrew, Sean O'Connell, Lachlan Sepping, Zac Cairncross, Mitchell Mallia, Giorgio Speranza, Roberto Speranza, Anthony Frangie, Nathan Millgate, Connor Evans, Anthony Costa, Dion Shaw, Mark Rodic

## MANLY UNITED FC

**Coach:** Paul Dee

**2019 finish:** Ninth

**Major signings:** Marley Peterson, Jack Fulton, Paul Katsetis, Richie Cardozo, Dean Bereveskos

**Star of the Future:** Marley Peterson

**Player to Watch out for:** Brendan Cholakian

**It's been** a tough two seasons for Manly United as they struggled to back up their 2017 Championship win instead finishing near the bottom of the ladder.

**Although not** being outclassed in the majority of matches, Manly have lacked a clinical edge to their game which has seen them struggle.

**It will** be on longtime coach Paul Dee to help his young team discover that winning x-factor in 2020 as they push for a return to finals football.

**The club** has received a boost with the signing of former junior Marley Peterson while journeyman Richie Cardozo has come back to the club after spending time overseas as well as at rival NPL clubs. Dee also strengthened his squad with recruitment of former Dandenong Thunder midfielder Dean Bereveskos, who did play NPL as the Sydneysider spent time with the Bonnyrigg White Eagles.

**Manly United** 2020 Team: Sam Gallagher, Brendan Cholakian, Dom Ferguson, Kieren Paull, Brad McDonald, Dylan Mitchell, Sasa Macura, Joe Fox, James Georgaklis, Harry McCarthy, Sam Benton, Luca Kmet, Finn Ashton, Patrick Weir, Marley Peterson, Mark McManus, Paul Katsetis, Jack Fulton, Richie Cardozo, Dean Bereveskos.

## MOUNT DRUITT TOWN RANGERS

**Coach:** Aiden Desmond

**2019 finish:** Seventh

**Major signings:** Mateo Poljak, Travis Oughtred, Aaron Avery, Hussein Jasli, Daniel Fogarty

**Star of the Future:** Ismail Hares

**Player to Watch out for:** Mirjan Pavlovic

**Mt Druitt** Town Rangers delivered a huge first season in the NPL NSW in 2019 and will be looking for nothing less than a place in the finals this time around.

**The Rangers** have made a big splash in the offseason bringing in former Western Sydney Wanderers and Newcastle Jets midfielder Matteo Poljak to lead the midfield as well as