



By George Stavroulakis

SYDNEY FC RELISHING HECTIC MATCH SCHEDULE

A hectic end to the A-League season for runaway leaders Sydney FC has been welcomed by veteran goalkeeper Andrew Redmayne.



Runaway A-League leaders Sydney FC say their hectic match schedule will only help their campaign for a domestic title double as they also ponder a home-state advantage. **The Sky Blues** can effectively wrap up the Premiers Plate by winning their first competition match in almost four months, when they host third-placed Wellington Phoenix on Friday week. **Sydney lead** second-placed Melbourne City, who have three games left, by eight points. **A win** over Wellington at Netstrata Jubilee Stadium would end City's chances of winning the plate and leave Phoenix only able to equal the points tally of Sydney, who have a vastly superior goal difference. **The Sky Blues** have six matches to play, the equal-highest along with three other current top-six sides, Phoenix, Perth

and Western United. **They will** have to cram their games into just over three weeks before the finals, but goalkeeper Andrew Redmayne believes the punishing schedule will work to his club's advantage. **"I don't** think it's a concern, if anything it's a positive," Redmayne told AAP. **"Footballers love** playing football. We are not too fond of long pre-seasons and lots of training, so I think having a raft of games will hold us in good stead **'Having six** league games before the finals start will probably have us in even better shape...we can get a really good run on, get our momentum going and get back into our groove." **A big plus** for Sydney is that they could potentially play almost all of their remaining games in NSW.

Four matches, including one away fixture against Brisbane, have already been assigned to Sydney-based venues. **A fifth-game**, against Victorian club Western United seems certain to be held in NSW, leaving just one away match against Adelaide where the venue still has to be confirmed. **"It will** be a good thing, but it's six one way and half a dozen the other," Redmayne said. **"Other teams** could relish the opportunity of being been away and just being fully football focused for a month (in camp). **"It depends** how you look at it. Personally I'd enjoy it more being at home." **Sydney coach** Steve Corica should have his strongest squad of the season available, with long-term injured players Ben Warland and Chris Zuvella both fit for the season resumption.



MATILDAS GOALKEEPER SIGNS FOR ARSENAL

Matildas goalkeeper Lydia Williams has signed for English giants Arsenal.

Williams becomes the fifth Australian at the Women's Super League giants after Caitlin Foord and Steph Catley joined Aussie coaches Joe Montemurro and Aaron D'Antino. **Williams signed** a one-year deal with the Gunners, with the option to renew for a second season. **The Australian** take over in North London caps off a strong season for Williams personally, where she set a new W-League record for longest without conceding en route to winning the 2020 W-League championship with Melbourne City. **Williams' greatest** challenge over the past few seasons in the NWSL has been cementing a starting place, with the Matildas' shot-stopper a perennial fixture in the Australian lineup but, at least recently, rarely played overseas. **Working her** way into the fray at Arsenal will likely be an even greater challenge, given the Gunners' wealth of options and current number one, Austrian Manuela Zinsberger. **Williams does**, however, have the massive and ever-growing Australian contingent at the club to give her a natural advantage. **A rarity** for Australian football at the elite level, but one that appears to be changing fast.



PFA SLAMS A-LEAGUE TRAVEL FIASCO

Professional Footballers Australia has slammed the A-League over the failure of Melbourne's three A-League teams to leave Victoria for a second consecutive day.

The A-League's trio of Victorian teams remains stranded at home as a fuming players' union accuses soccer hierarchy of mismanagement. **Players and** staff at Melbourne City, Melbourne Victory and Western United are still hopeful of a travel exemption breakthrough on Thursday from the NSW government. **Until granted**, they must stay in Victoria and the scheduled July 16 resumption of the A-League remains uncertain. **The three** clubs have twice been thwarted from departing, angering the players' body, Professional Footballers Australia. **On Monday** night, poor visibility at Canberra Airport prevented a late-night flight to the ACT, with players and staff left on the Tullamarine tarmac. **On Tuesday** night, the teams were on buses waiting to enter Melbourne Airport when told they would have to complete a 14-day quarantine and be unable to train for that time on entering the ACT.