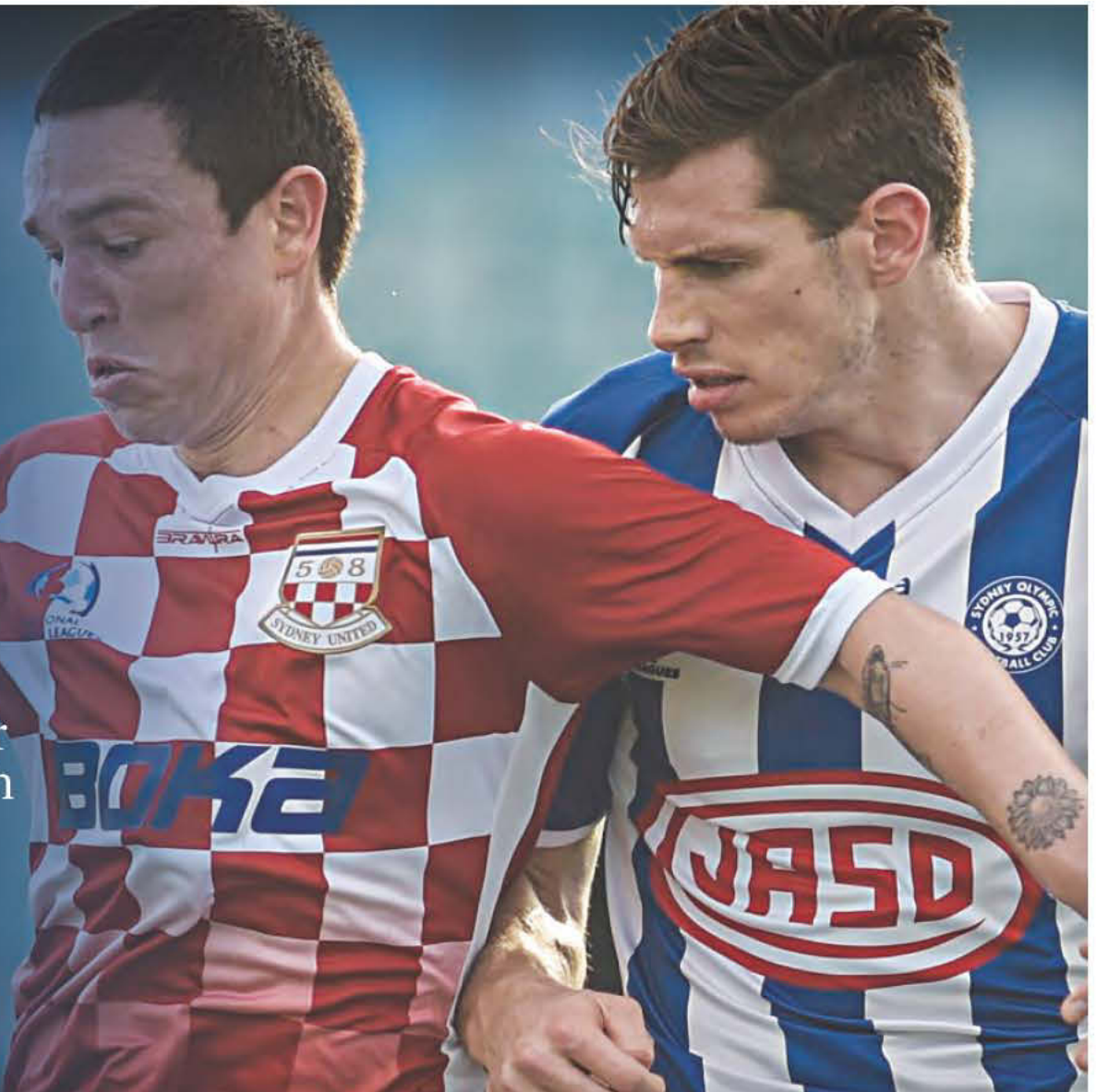




By George Stavroulakis

NPL NSW MEN'S ROUND 2 PREVIEW

It is round two of the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's competition with another six blockbuster fixtures set to take to the fields across Sydney.



The weekend's matches kick-off on Friday with APIA Leichhardt hosting Wollongong Wolves as the reigning champions and reigning premiers face off.

Manly United are also in action on Friday night as they look for their first win of the season against Western Sydney Wanderers, while Saturday night will feature Mt Druitt hosting Blacktown City.

Three games will take place on Sunday, Sydney United 58 against North Shore Mariners, Sydney Olympic facing off against Sydney FC and Rockdale hosting Marconi in the final match of the weekend.

Attached is the Round 2 official NPL NSW Men's Match Day Program.

APIA Leichhardt FC v Wollongong Wolves FC, 7:30pm Friday at Lambert Park

The reigning Premiers will take on the reigning league champions will do battle on Friday night as APIA Leichhardt FC host Wollongong Wolves at Lambert Park.

APIA will be desperate to return to the winner's circle after suffering defeat at the hands of rivals Marconi last week in the opening fixture of the rebooted NPL NSW Men's season.

If anyone thought teams were set to take this make shift competition lightly, they were wrong – the match against the Stallions saw how much playing the game again means to them.

Wollongong, on the other hand, will be pushing for their second win in as many games after they dispatched Mt Druitt 1-0 last round.

APIA will be without defender Paul Galimi for the clash after he was sent off against the Stallions which will force coach John Calleja into a reshuffle of his backline.

This will more than likely see the introduction of one of the club's standout defenders during the start of the NPL season before COVID-19 hit, Josh Symons return to the starting eleven.

Attack will be another major concern for Calleja after his side's attack was largely nullified but the club hope to call back Corey Biczo to assist in that department.

Jeremy Cox scored their only goal with a stunning volley

deep into injury time and he will be needed to maintain that touch in front of goal if APIA is to take home the three points.

The Luke Wilkshire coached Wolves will be also working on their finishing in front of goal ahead of this weekend's clash.

Wollongong struggled to make the most of their litany of chances against an underdone Rangers outfit.

They won't have the luxury of letting opportunities go to waste this week.

Japanese import Takeru Okada will be one to watch as well as well as frontman Bul Juach and the attacking talents of Marcus Beattie.

After such a long break both teams are still finding their feet but with the shortened season APIA and Wollongong will be desperate to take home all three points.

Manly United FC v Western Sydney Wanderers, 7.30pm Friday at Cromer Park

Manly United and Western Sydney Wanderers will be fighting for their first win of the season when the two sides go head to head at Cromer Park on Friday night.

The boys from the Northern Beaches will be hoping to get the better of the Wanderers in what is the first time the two sides have met in the NPL NSW Men's competition.

Manly were held to a scoreless draw against Rockdale City Suns in week one while the Wanderers suffered a 3-2 loss at the hands of fierce rivals Sydney FC.

Both teams showed plenty of flair going forward in their opening round matches, but Manly were unable to find the back of the net – something coach Paul Dee won't want a repeat of this time.

Defender Kieran Paull and striker Marley Peterson were United's best against Rockdale with both testing Suns keeper Tomislav Arcaba.

The Wanderers showed plenty of heart despite defeat in round one with the way they fought back from 3-0 down at half time.

Coach Arthur Diles really knows how to bring the best out of his young upcoming stars as he has vowed not to change

the team's style for the entire rebooted season.

All Auglah and Stefan Nikolic both found the back of the net as the visitors dominated the second 45 minutes with a showing which is sure to fill the young side with plenty of confidence – look for the talents of Dean Pelekanos in midfield to also play a telling role in the Wanderers attack.

Thomas Aquilina was also dangerous in the club's first game so expect him to be in and around the action.

Manly will need to call on all their experience to get the win against a Western Sydney team with the ability to take over a match.

Mt Druitt Town Rangers v Blacktown City FC, 7pm Saturday at Popondetta Park

Western Sydney bragging rights will go on the line as Mt Druitt Town Rangers host Blacktown City at Popondetta Park on Saturday night.

Rangers coach Franco Cosentino will be desperate for his first win in charge and to get the scalp of local rival Blacktown would be a huge confidence booster for him and his team.

In round one, Mt Druitt suffered a narrow 1-0 loss to Wollongong Wolves with their scrambling defence going a long way to keeping the reigning league champions at bay for most of the match.

The Rangers were pushed all the way by Wollongong with captain and shot-stopper Carlos Saliadarre making several key saves against a dangerous Wolves attack.

They were able to hold their heads high in what was a gritty performance as Solomon Monahan-Vaiika and Jake Mamone battled for the full ninety minutes.

A lot of pressure will be put in the hands of their ace marksman John Roberts who is set to take on his former club he had so much success at as a junior.

Blacktown, on the other hand, were unlucky not to have taken home three competition points as they were held to a 0-0 draw against North Shore Mariners.

Mark Crittenden's side spurned a handful of scoring chances and nearly paid the price when North Shore had a goal disallowed.

New Blacktown recruit Mario Shabow was a handful for