

KICKOFF



NATIONAL
PREMIER LEAGUES
NSW MEN'S



NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES NSW MEN'S

GRAND FINAL



2019
Saturday
31 AUGUST
6pm

bankwest STADIUM



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Football NSW would like to thank all of its writers, photographers, commentators and videographers for what has been an outstanding year.

Thanks to Nick Houghton, Adam Santarossa, Tony Tannous, Will Gotsis, Nicholas Kutjnak, David McDonald, Tony Salerno, Nate Patrick, Jack Clifton, Chris Curulli, Joe Russo, Micky Brock, Cal Behrendt, Madeline Riley, Max Grieve, Justin Davies, George Loupis, Sebastian Giunta, Jeremy Ng, Damian Briggs, Sportscast, LIGR, 5Stream as well as Football NSW's Media Manager Mark Stavroulakis, Digital Coordinator Jess Grima, Multimedia Coordinator James Anderson and Graphic Designer Melinda Kopp for all their hard work and efforts in continuing to promote the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's competition.

Also, a special thank you to the Football NSW staff assisting in the delivery of today's Grand Final.

It has been an incredible season with so many highlights that have certainly put NSW's top tier Men's competition back on the map.

Here's to a big Grand Final day!





FOOTBALL
NSW

WELCOME FROM THE CEO

It's an honour as CEO and on behalf of the Board of Directors of Football NSW to welcome you all to the wonderfully redeveloped Bankwest Stadium for the National Premier League's NSW Men's 2019 Grand Final.

It's been a memorable year for the sport with a number of fantastic achievements and today promises to be a blockbuster affair for all clubs, players, supporters, coaches and volunteers involved in this wonderful sport of ours.

The Grand Final is the culmination of what has been an amazing National Premier Leagues season, with two iconic Australian football clubs going toe to toe as APIA Leichhardt Tigers entertain Sydney United 58 in the main match at 6pm.

APIA Leichhardt Tigers coached by John Calleja, come into this match with the luxury of a one week break after defeating Premiers Wollongong Wolves in the Major Semi Final.

It's been a big season for the Tigers who will compete in their third successive NPL NSW Men's Grand Final.

They say third times a charm, so Calleja and his men led by captain Sean Symons and the inspirational maestro himself Franco Parisi, will be looking forward to spoiling the party today in bringing back the Championship to the Inner West suburbs of Sydney.

Their opponents really need no introduction, Sydney United 58, coached by Miro Vlastelica, have come through to the Grand Final the hard way.

They've beaten the likes of the Marconi Stallions, Blacktown City and more recently the Wolves, to book their spot in today's big finale, a huge credit to the team with an impressive roster with the likes of Matthew Sim, Patrick Antelmi and



Stuart Hodge
Football NSW CEO

Yianni Fragogiannis running the ship.

The Reds will be hungry to continue on with their winning run, but it won't be an easy task against a determined APIA Leichhardt Tigers outfit full of experience and confidence.

I want to also wish the 2019 Premiers Wollongong Wolves the best of luck representing NSW at the upcoming NPL Finals Series later next month taking on Capital Football's Canberra Olympic in round 1.

I would like to acknowledge the support of our sponsors, TAFE NSW, Wholesale Trophies and the Official Ball Sponsor for the 2019 NPL NSW Men's competition MITRE for their valued input and service for our game.

Last but not least, I would like to thank you, the fans for your support, not only during the season but at today's Grand Final.

Our game is for the fans and about the fans and as such we hope you enjoy your day here at Bankwest Stadium and celebrate our great sport.

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U18'S - KICK OFF 12PM

MATCH PREVIEW

by Chris Curulli

The National Premier Leagues NSW Men's 18's Grand Final will see Blacktown City FC and the Mt Druitt Town Rangers fiercely lock horns in a local Western Sydney derby at Bankwest Stadium.

Blacktown City enjoyed superior form over the length of the season, having concluded the campaign 12 points clear of their Grand Final opponents.

However if their history against the Rangers is anything to go by, there will be goals aplenty and little to split the sides.

Just over a week ago, the same two met in a thrilling 3-3 draw which saw a ten-man Blacktown City ultimately triumph 5-4 on penalties and book themselves a ticket to the decider.

Before then, Mt Druitt inflicted Blacktown City's only defeat in the last 12 months with a 4-3 victory in Round 1 before playing out a 2-2 stalemate in their return league meeting back in May.

On Monday night, a solitary Rhys Osmond penalty saw the Rangers overcome Sydney United 58 for the second time in a fortnight, earning themselves a rematch against City with the Championship now at stake.

Blacktown City's success under coach John Carnevale has been built upon solid defensive foundations, having conceded only 16 goals over 22 rounds— half the amount of anyone else in the competition.

"We have had a very successful season as a result of great discipline, structure and application," Carnevale said.

"The boys have been introduced to a culture where they are very understanding of what a winning mentality looks like.

"Our 18's and 20's have done extremely well this year and it's all been off the back of strong defensive principles and clear, well-considered transition play.

"The boys are very fit and mentally strong, which I think are key attributes to success."

They may be on a 22-game undefeated streak dating back to March, but Carnevale is determined not to underestimate their opponents as he prepares his side to rise to the occasion yet again.

"Mt Druitt are a very well credentialled team," he added.

"In all three games this season there's been very little in it and I wouldn't expect anything different.

"They are a strong, powerful, physical team that ask a lot of questions defensively.

"It's important that our defensive structure is strong, and we don't get caught in transition because that's one of their key strengths.

"It's going to come down to the team that settles down the quickest and applies their game plan as effectively as possible."

For Mt Druitt, a club who experienced promotion to the top flight prior to the 2019 campaign, their coach Joe Dermillio is elated with his team's progress.

"This season has been an outstanding achievement off the back of a number of years of hard work that the club has put in.

"It's a deserved result for those people that got us here and an outstanding outcome for a bunch of lads who have put in 100% since last October.

"I think the best two teams have found their way to the Grand Final most deservedly."

Dermillio is convinced that his boys will leave everything they have out on the Bankwest Stadium pitch.

"Every time we have played Blacktown it has been one hell of a challenge," he reflected.

"They are a great team with a great coach and that's what you want to be up against because if you succeed, you know you've succeeded against the best.

"So we're really looking forward to the challenge.

"It's been a tough last few weeks, but I have every faith that our boys' character will most definitely shine through.

"They'll be up for it, don't worry about that."





U18'S TEAM LISTS



1	Zane	Cunico
2	Corey	Smith
3	Ryan	Duffy
4	Blake	Richards
6	Ryan	Attard
8	Bradley	Tapp
9	Connor	Rose
10	Thomas	Bienasz
11	Kai	McLoughlin
12	Ben	Berry
13	Christian	Cirino
14	Tyren	Burnie
15	Caleb	Jackson-Brown
16	Cameron	Veldhuizen
17	Sebastian	Hernandez
20	Tristian	Vidackovic

Coach: John Carnevale
Physio: Rebecca Gonzalez

2	Cooper	Halfpenny
3	Nathan	Grimaldi
4	Blake	Ilitch
6	Riley	Howarth
8	Dimos	Vlachos
9	Rhys	Osmond
10	Jesse	Hirschowitz
11	Anthony	Idehen
12	Dilang	Pel-Kun Chol
13	Zane	Sharma
14	Callum	Garrett
18	Daniel	Goni
19	Nonso	Chukwueke
21	Jerome	Narayan
22	Brendan	Allen

Coach: Joe Dermillio
Assistant Coach: Christian Belardo
Manager: Kelly Halfpenny
Physio: Active Body Physiotherapy

Referee: J. Crawford

Assistant Referees: B. Merchant & M. Ibrahim

4th Official: A. Bloch

Assessor: R. Doenau



U20'S - KICK OFF 2.30PM

MATCH PREVIEW

by Chris Curulli

This season's top two sides will do battle in what shapes to be a National Premier Leagues NSW Men's 20's decider to remember.

Blacktown City led the competition from Round 6 and never looked back, finishing five points clear of the Sutherland Sharks who locked in second spot.

City overcame a Daniel Bragg red card to trump Rockdale City Suns 2-1 with an Emmanuel Gonzalez winner deep into extra time and earn themselves a shot at their first 20's Championship since 2015.

Standing in their way are a Sharks side who have been there and done just that not once, but twice before under Nick Dimovski.

Sutherland took the long route to the big dance this year, falling to Rockdale in a penalty shootout before rebounding a week later to defeat the Suns 3-1 and book themselves a date with the Premiers at Bankwest Stadium.

They boast the competition's top scorer James Temelkovski, who with a tally of 16 goals for the campaign and a brace last time out approaches the final in red-hot form.

The sides have met twice this campaign, with Blacktown earning early bragging rights with a 3-0 triumph in Round 4, before settling for a tense 1-1 draw at Seymour Shaw back in June.

Blacktown City boss Andrew Montgomery is wary of the considerable Sutherland threat.

"Sutherland are a very good team with some players who can hurt you when you make mistakes," he said.

"I'm expecting another very tight game between two of the best teams in the competition going at it.

"It should be a good spectacle."

2019 has been far from straightforward for Blacktown, who only retained a single player from last season's 20's Premiership-winning squad and have utilised a grand total of 41 different personnel this campaign.

However, any off-field discomfort has failed to restrict their on-field performances, and Montgomery is confident that his outfit who cruised to the Premiership are primed to capture another prized piece of silverware.

"The overarching message from Blacktown is that we're giving young players opportunities to shine, and the future is bright," he added.

"All of the boys have been very consistent throughout the year.

"The Grand Final is exactly the same as what we've done all season: we'll just do what we do and do it very well."

On the other hand, the men from the Shire are chasing an unprecedented three consecutive Grand Final successes and will endeavour to harness some considerable experience to their advantage.

"Blacktown City led the competition by a country mile during the season, so it's going to be a really tough match against a quality team," Sutherland manager Dimovski said.

"There is no doubt in my mind that if the Sharks turn up to play, we can beat anyone.

"We know what it takes to win it, not just to turn up and be a part of the parade.

"Having been to the big dance before, there's no nerves from our end."

Following the recent announcement that he will take up the reins as Sutherland's first team manager from next season, Dimovski is eager to cap off his illustrious three-year tenure as 20's boss with a third consecutive title.

"It would personally be a fairy-tale finish to win three grand finals for the club that I love, having been involved for over 15 years," he added.

"I have full confidence in my team and there's no doubt we can win another Grand Final for sure."





U20'S TEAM LISTS



1	Zane	Cunico	(GK)
11	Emmanuel	Gonzalez	
16	Dale	Howarth	
18	Josh	Bartolotto	
20	Dylan	Niski	
21	William	Mutch	
24	Jackson	Bandiera	
26	Alen	Aganovic	
27	Alec	Purves	
29	Daniel	Colosimo	
30	Daniel	Zahra	
31	Stuart	Gosling	
32	Carlos	De Olivera	
33	Anthony	Gallo	
34	Suley	Bangura	
35	Rhett	Desilva	
38	Kai	McLaughlin	

Coach: Andy Montgomery
Assistant Coach: Daniel Lownds
Manager: Dean Montgomery
Physio: Rebecca Gonzalez

2	Quentin	Cheng
15	Thomas	Papa
23	Deren	O'Brien
24	Dominic	Brischetto
25	Brodie	Clarkson
26	Mario	Aleksic
27	Matthew	Taverniti
28	Richard	Stewart
29	Jarrad	Wiley
30	Thomas	Aquilina
31	James	Carli
32	Alexander	Lopez
34	Charlie	Jones
35	Jacob	McDonald
37	Andrew	Bova
38	James	Temelevski
39	Jordan	Paull
45	Luke	Sauer

Coach: Nick Dimovski
Assistant Coach: Steve Gordon
Manager: Craig Simmons

Referee: C. Wright

Assistant Referees: H. Fenton-White & S. Quinn

4th Official: S. Kelly

Assessor: S. Perticarini





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FIRST GRADE

MATCH PREVIEW

The biggest game of the National Premier Leagues NSW season has arrived with months of blood, sweat and tears culminating in a blockbuster clash of the titans to decide the season's biggest prize.

APIA Leichhardt Tigers are back for their third straight grand final and will be hoping this year is the year they finally break through for Championship glory when they take on Sydney United 58 at Bankwest Stadium.

The Tigers and United finished the season in second and fourth place respectively with their finals form setting up a thrilling competition decider.

Huge wins against Premiers Wollongong Wolves secured a grand final berth for both sides ensuring they are full of confidence as they battle for silverware.

While APIA have been a regular feature of recent NPL NSW Men's Grand Finals, the match is United 58's first since they were defeated by Blacktown City in the 2016 decider.

Both side's have been two of the most successful team's in the league over the past decade but neither have been able to taste Championship triumph.

Sydney United 58's last grand final win came 13 years ago when they defeated Blacktown City in the 2006 decider, while APIA's came 16 years ago in 2003 with win against Blacktown City.

The path to Bankwest Stadium has been quite different for APIA and United.

APIA kicked off from where they left off last season with another brilliant campaign boasting one of the competition's best attack and defence records.

United 58 on the other hand have found form when it has mattered most after what has been a rollercoaster of a season featuring numerous highs and lows.

The Red's finals form has been a sight to be seen with eleven goals in just three games, but more impressive has been their fighting spirit having fought their way back into their last two matches.

On the park both team's have squads bristling with talent.

APIA Leichhardt are packed with a brilliant balance of youth and experience while they also boast a number of big time match winners who could prove to be the difference on Saturday.

Striker Chris Payne finished the season with 21 goals, exactly half of APIA's total goal tally, while also scoring key goals in both of their finals wins.

Payne and fellow APIA midfielder Nick Stavroulakis will have plenty of extra motivation as they come up against their former side in United 58. Both will be driven to prove a point to their old team.





You can't mention APIA without their midfield maestro Franco Parisi. The 36 year-old is playing as good as he ever has and his ability to move the ball to create chances will play a major factor in his side's chances.

The injury of club stalwart David D'Apuzzo in the early rounds carved out a brilliant opportunity for youngster Sam McIlhatton and he has delivered in spades with his lung busting running and fearless efforts becoming a big part of APIA's identity.

A full roster however full of injuries has not stopped United 58's drive for Championship glory.

The mid season departure of Stavroulakis to APIA, as well as Sebastian Gallegos' exit has left their midfield stocks very short.

An injury to star midfielder Glen Trifiro on the cusp of the finals looked like it could further scupper United's chances. Instead Tariq Maia has made the most of his opportunity and has become one of the league's form players with three amazing performances in his side's last three games.

Defensively the combination of Tomislav Uskok and Adrian Vlastelica has been a solid duo at the heart of the backline, while Yianni Fragogiannis and Christian Gonzalez have been tough to beat on the flanks.

One player APIA will need to keep a close eye on is Patrick Antelmi who has proven to be a supersub of sorts for Miro Vlastelica's side. He has been a spark plug in attack and has score

more than his fair share of match winning goals.

This game presents a number of key matchups with some of the competitions best facing off and creating big questions which are sure to be answered during this mammoth clash.

Can APIA's big game experience help them stifle a carefree Sydney United 58 attack?

Will it be Chris Payne or United's Patrick Antelmi who dictates the attack at Bankwest Stadium?

Will the scars of two straight grand final defeats prove too heavy a weight to shake?

And can Sydney United 58 find the energy to defeat APIA after playing five games in 14 days?

APIA and Sydney United 58 have played twice this season with the Tigers winning 3-1 and 1-0 in each encounter.

United 58 have proven they fear nobody and have the ability to beat anyone on the day. However, will they have enough left in the tank to beat APIA in the biggest match of the season.

Whatever the outcome, one thing for sure is that there will be plenty of foals excitement and entertainment on the menu.

Because when it's all said and done, only one team can be crowned champion.





1ST G TEAM

1	Ivan	Necevski	(GK)
3	Paul	Galimi	
4	Josh	Symons	
6	Chris	Payne	
7	Tynan	Diaz	
8	Corey	Biczo	
10	Franco	Parisi	
12	Sam	McIlhatton	
14	Lachlan	Hughes	
15	Themba	Muata-Marlow	
16	Sean	Symons	
17	Sam	Gulisano	
18	Adrian	Ucchino	
19	Dom	Nasrabadi	
20	Michael	Trajkovski	
21	Michael	Kouta	
22	Luke	Turnbull	(GK)
23	Nicholas	Stavroulakis	

Coach: John Calleja
 Manager: Sergio Bucciarelli
 Manager: Sam Barletta
 Manager: Joe Calabro
 Manager: Vincent Leto
 Physio: Michael Sawan

Referee:
 Assistant Referees:
 Fourth Official:
 Assessor:

TRADE LISTS



1	Daniel	Sadaka	(GK)
2	Adam	Farkas	
3	Jordan	Roberts	
4	Adrian	Vlastelica	
5	Anthony	Tomelic	
6	Petar	Markovic	
7	Peter	Simonoski	
8	Matthew	Sim	
9	Patrick	Antelmi	
11	Yianni	Perkatis	
12	Liam	Rose	
13	Michael	Ruhs	
14	Tomislav	Uskok	
15	Tariq	Maia	
17	Matthew	Bilic	
18	Glenn	Trifiro	
19	Josh	Macdonald	
20	Christian	Gonzalez	
21	Thomas	Manos	(GK)
22	Yianni	Fragogiannis	
23	Luke	Vlastelica	
24	Anthony	Vrlic	

Head Coach: Miro Vlastelica

Assistant Coach: Jerry Bilokapic

Goalkeeper Coach: Vitas Males

Gear Steward: Raymond Gerrie

Physiotherapist: Denana Kadric

B. Abraham

A. Giev, B. Wright

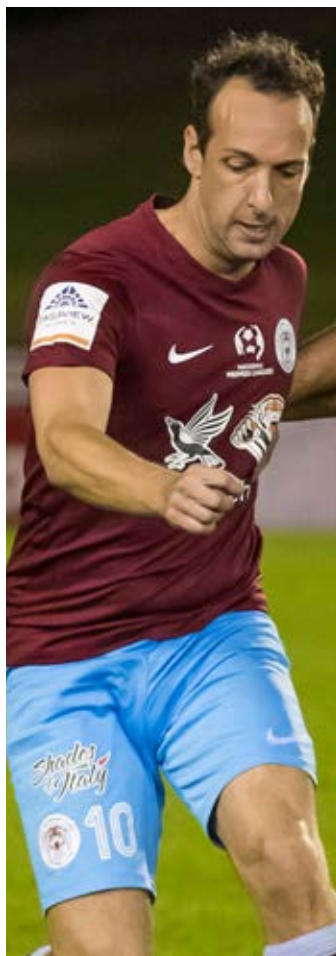
K. Ams

R. Baker



KEY PLAYERS

APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS



FRANCO PARISI

APIA's mercurial midfield maestro has once again proven age is just a number going to another level in 2019.

The veteran playmaker is the heart and soul of the Tigers and nothing would mean more to the team and the club is to see their star lifting the trophy on grand final day.

Few players in the competition are as technically gifted as Parisi and to make things harder for his opponents, he isn't scared to put in the hard yards to make a key defensive play.

Don't be surprised to see Parisi in the running for the Robbie Slater medal as the Grand Final's best on ground if APIA are to win the title.

PAUL GALIMI

A fearless defender who will throw his body on the line to help his team, APIA stopper Paul Galimi is a player who is set to play a big part on grand final day for the Tigers.

A versatile player who is just at home in the centre of the backline or at fullback and can match it with both physical marksmen or pacy strikers.

Galimi's hard tackling style can stop the best attackers in their tracks and he is sure to make life difficult for the United 58 attack.

When the going gets tough, Galimi gets that much tougher, so expect fireworks from the tough tackling defender.

SAM MCILLHATTON

What Sam McIlhatton lacks in experience, The APIA rising star makes up for it in work ethic and natural talent.

An injury to David D'Apuzzo provided McIlhatton a chance to be a regular starter for the Tigers and he has taken it with both hands becoming one of the first on the team sheet.

He is a true box to box midfielder providing plenty of hard running and grit in defence as well as x-factor and finesse in attack.

He may be one of the youngest players on the field on grand final day but he will also be one of the most important.

CHRIS PAYNE

The clinical striker had a point to prove this season after being released by Sydney United 58 last year and with a return of 21 goals it is fair to say their poor decision has been APIA's gain.

As prolific as ever, Payne has been the point of the Tigers attack scoring exactly half of the club's total goals this campaign.

Strong in the air and with both feet, the striker has an eye for goal like few others.

Payne scored a hat trick against United 58 earlier this season and will be confident he can do it again on the biggest stage.



KEY PLAYERS

SYDNEY UNITED 58



THOMAS MANOS

Sydney United 58's acrobatic goalkeeper Thomas Manos is player who knows what it is like to play in big matches.

Despite his young age, the gloveman has been a regular fixture between the posts at Edensor Park for the past four seasons and has played in more finals than many players experience in their career.

His ability to make big saves will be vital against a dangerous APIA attack.

If Manos plays well it could be a tough day at the office for the Tigers' strikers.

MATT SIM

A wily and savvy player who is just as comfortable scoring goals as he is creating them, veteran attacker Matt Sim will play a huge role for Sydney United 58 on Saturday.

The former Central Coast Mariners player has been consistently one of United 58's best all year and yet he has still found a way to lift his game again for the finals.

Blessed with slick dribbling skills and a knack for unlocking a defence, Sim could prove to be a handful for the APIA backline.

Expect much of the United 58 attack to go through Sim early as they look to get the most out of one of their best players.

TOMISLAV USKOK

The return of Tomislav Uskok to Edensor Park in June has proven to be a major acquisition for United 58 coach Miro Vlastelica.

The monstrous central defender is a physical beast in the backline and his presence alone is enough to slow the opposition.

While Uskok will have his hands full against APIA, the stopper is more than capable of providing security at the back to allow the midfield to push forward.

His size also creates huge mismatches at set pieces which could lead to vital goals just as he did against Blacktown City in the semi-finals.

PATRICK ANTELM

Few players live for the big moments the way United 58 striker Patrick Antelmi does.

The versatile attacking player has an incredible record of scoring big goals in big matches and that has only continued this finals series with four in three matches.

While Vlastelica has utilised Antelmi off the bench during the playoffs, it has given United 58 a supersub truly capable of changing the game in an instant.

If United need a clutch goal at the death, expect Antelmi to be the one to make it happen.

PLAYER COMMENTS

APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS



SEAN SYMONS

On why it will be third time lucky for APIA

I think the team is so much more relaxed this time around. While we didn't win either of the past two grand finals, it's a sense we've done this before and all the extra stresses we've had previously just aren't there.

In 2017 we were caught off guard a bit and was done by the lottery which is a penalty shootout, while last year we limped into the grand final with a tonne of injuries and players unavailable.

This time around the squad is mostly fit, we have had time to recover and not being in the FFA Cup has meant we can focus on this game.

Everyone has been in such a good mindset in the lead up to this game. Best of all is the fact that we are all on the same page and motivated to finally breakthrough and get the championship which has eluded us the past few years.

On the secret to APIA's consistent success

To be perfectly honest I think it really comes down to the players themselves and how tight knit this group has been for quite a few seasons.

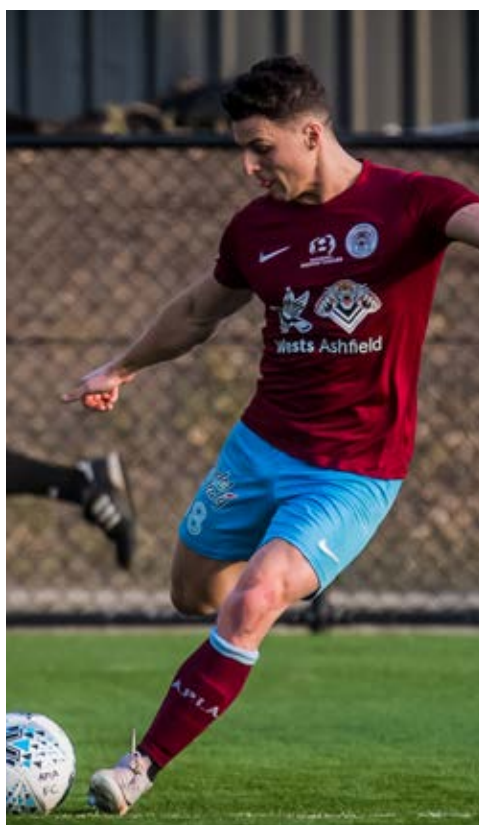
The team is just a group of great guys who on the most part get along really well and put in for each other on the pitch.

Having the same consistent core group of players for the past few years has really helped build a strong culture at the club which has been reflected in how we play on the pitch.

On captaining your team in a grand final

It is a real honour and even though it will be my second time around it doesn't get any less special.

Hopefully this time I'll be able to lift the trophy with the boys.



COREY BICZO

On bouncing back from two grand final defeats

There's not really extra pressure. We have a lot of experience so we feel pretty comfortable going into it.

The aim of course is to win so it's more motivation than any pressure.

To a degree we feel a bit like we've been there and done that but this time we just need to come away with the trophy.

On taking on Sydney United 58

I'm really excited to be going up against Sydney United 58 in the final because it's something different.

The feeling was always that we'd need to go up against Wollongong again so to play someone different makes it a bit more exciting.

On Playing the grand final at Bankwest Stadium

There is great hype around the game being at the new stadium and it should make for a great atmosphere.

The fact it is a night grand final and on a Saturday is what I'm the most excited about.

I love playing at night and I much prefer it than during the day.



PLAYER COMMENTS

SYDNEY UNITED 58



PATRICK ANTELMI

On Sydney United's incredible late season turn around

Just leading up to the Manly game in round 22 we realised we hadn't fulfilled our potential and we needed to make the most of things and see where it takes us.

This is a very talented team and it has shown in our results throughout the finals.

We are confident in our abilities and believe we can finish our season with a victory in the grand final

On surviving the Sydney United 58's packed schedule

The boys have been fantastic backing up for game after game with only a day or two of recovery and then delivering a huge performance.

Everyone is just doing what they have to do to get their body right in-between games.

It is a pretty unique preparation for a grand final but we are just doing everything we can to make the most of this opportunity.

On being a game changer off the bench

The most important thing is to give it everything from the second you get on the field.

Sometime you only have a few minutes to make an impact on a match so you can't waste much time trying to slowly work yourself into the game.

Obviously you want to start every game but occasionally you need to do what is best for the team to win.



THOMAS MANOS

On winning when the pressure is on

It all comes down to mentality and fighting until the very end which this team has shown all through the finals.

All of our players can trust their teammate to give everything in the tank to help get a winning result.

Quite simply, the opportunity to play in the finals or a grand final don't come along all the time so you have to give it the respect it deserves and fight to the very end.

On bouncing back from the Waratah Cup defeat

Losing to Marconi in the Waratah Cup final really took the wind out of the squad and we struggled to get back on track straight away.

However, it just got to the point where we realised we were wasting everything we had done earlier in the season and had to turn things around.

We all decided to treat every game like our last and leave everything we had on the pitch.

On dealing with injuries to key players

Injury is inevitable and you can't focus too much on when a player goes down.

Obviously you're concerned about your teammate but you need to keep composed and trust the replacement to come on and get a job done.

Losing Glen Trifiro a week before the finals was a bit of deja vu from last season when Panni Nikas was ruled out with injury at roughly the same time.

However, Tariq Maia has stepped in and lifted his game to a whole new level making a heap of game changing plays.

A strong starting 11 is not enough to be successful in this competition and if you don't have good squad depth then it is very difficult to achieve those results.



TALE OF THE TAPE

2019 ENCOUNTERS



ROUND 4
SUNDAY, 31 MARCH 2019
AT SYDNEY UNITED SPORTS CENTRE

SYDNEY UNITED 58 1 - APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS 3

A sensational Chris Payne hat-trick buried his former side Sydney United 58 as APIA Leichhardt claimed a 3-1 win in a blockbuster National Premier Leagues NSW Men's clash at Sydney United Sports Centre.

It was a fairytale return to the ground where Payne called home for three seasons with the veteran front man delivering a striking masterclass in front of his former fans.

An absolute screamer on the bounce from an Ivan Necevski goal kick opened Payne's account on the cusp of half time.

United 58 levelled the score thanks to some clinical finishing from Patrick Antelmi but it was Payne's day with the former A-League striker finishing off a sublime Franco Parisi assist to give APIA a 2-1 lead in the 68th minute.

Payne wrapped up the result, and his hat-trick, in the dying stages of the match when he converted from the penalty spot to condemn United 58 to their first defeat of the season.

ROUND 15
SUNDAY, 16 JUNE 2019
AT LAMBERT PARK

APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS 1 - SYDNEY UNITED 58 0

A 10-man APIA Leichhardt Tigers team claimed an incredible 1-0 win against all odds at Lambert Park.

Former Sydney United 58 striker Chris Payne pulled a Rabona kick from his bag of tricks which deflected off Adrian Vlastelica into the back of the net to give APIA the incredible, yet unlikely, victory.

The home side was forced to play a man down after only 24 minutes when Themba Muata-Marlow was sent for an early shower for a tug on the shirt of United striker Peter Simonoski.

It made for a tense and thrilling match with neither side giving an inch.

However, United 58 could never take advantage of their extra player and paid the price in the dying stages of the match.

The result kept APIA in second spot on the ladder while United 58 remained in fourth with seven rounds left to play.



FIRST GRADE

COACHES COMMENTS



JOHN CALLEJA

On playing in a third straight grand final

It's a testament to this group of players that they have been able to reach the grand final so consistently over the past three years.

It is not easy to do that in this competition so that in itself is a major achievement in my eyes. In saying that we have nothing to show for it so far and at the end of the day winning the Championship is what you work towards.

Each year the situation has been different and there have been different challenges but I feel this time around we are much better prepared to make the most of this match.

On how this year's team differs from APIA's last two grand final sides

Balance is probably the word I would use to best describe the team this year because of the good mix of youth and experience.

While the core of the team has remained the same, we have seen young players like Sam McIlhatton and Michael Kouta carve their place in the team while other players such as Paul Galimi have taken their game to a new level.

Last season we had a lot of success in attack through Jordan Murray, but he left the club before the grand final. This season Chris Payne has come in and filled the void in attack so to be able to field a full strength team gives us the strongest possible chance of winning.

On APIA's keys to victory

Not much will change for us in terms of how we play. It is very easy to complicate things and go overboard with game planning coming into such a big game.

We have tried to play good attacking football all season and utilised the strengths of our players. That won't change on Saturday.

We have had success against Sydney United 58 this season in the two games we have played against them so obviously we will take notes on what worked in those matches.



MIRO VLASTELICA

On navigating United's crazy finals schedule

It has been a ridiculous two weeks having played five games in only 14 days after today's Grand Final.

I have never heard of another team playing this many massive fixtures in such a short space so it is a credit to the players how they have handled it so far.

Recovery is the most important thing because when you're playing in such big games whether it be a finals match or our FFA Cup match, there shouldn't be any issue for the players in getting motivated for these fixtures.

Having Craig Duncan on board this season has really helped the players stay healthy and in the best possible shape through this busy period.

On being grand final underdogs

It's not really something we think about to be honest. We are more focused on our capabilities and being confident that we can get a result against whoever we play.

All finals we may not have been the favourites to win each match but the self belief is there among the players that we are good enough which has carried us to where we are now.

There is a lot of determination and fighting spirit in this group of players and I think that has been evident in our three finals games so far.

On what grand final success would mean for the club

This is what you work towards all year so of course it would be a massive for the team.

At a club like Sydney United 58 there is always that expectation of success so just making it to the final is not enough.

We need to be striving to win every competition we play in and reach the heights we know we are capable of.

APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS PLAYER FEATURE

FAMILY FUELLING PAYNE DESIRE TO LIFT TROPHY

by Nicholas Houghton

A personal mission is set to be the driving force motivating APIA Leichhardt Tiger's star striker Chris Payne to carry his side to Grand Final glory.

The veteran front-man has been scoring goals for fun this campaign but revealed the struggle of his son Cayde, who suffers from Spina bifida, has been the inspiration behind his on field heroics.

The former North Queensland Fury and Newcastle Jets striker explained how his son loves to watch him play and enjoys nothing more than seeing his dad find the back of the net.

Ahead of the National Premier Leagues NSW Grand Final, Payne told Football NSW that he would love nothing more than seeing the joy on Cayde's face when he lifts the championship trophy with a win on Saturday.

"We've been in and out of hospital with Cayde a number of times for surgery so it has been a tough time for the family," Payne said.

"He comes to a lot of the games and is always smiling which keeps me going as well.

"My family mean everything to me and I owe so much to my wife for everything she does. If it wasn't for her I don't think I would still be playing football.

"Obviously their motivation will again play a big part and I hope I can do them proud by helping APIA lift the championship."

The front-man, who joined APIA at the start of the season after an acrimonious exit from Sydney United 58, said he has loved his time at Lambert park and is determined to help the club win the championship title which has eluded them.

He admitted the unfortunate nature of his United exit will be in the back of his mind when he faces off against his former side at Bankwest Stadium.

"I had a few successful years with Sydney United and really enjoyed my time at the club but they felt they didn't need me any more after last season. The club didn't even contact me to tell me I wasn't going to be re-signed. One of my teammates had to break the news to me," he said.

"That sort of thing really leaves a sour taste in your mouth but it did give me the chance to join APIA who have been an incredible club to be a part of.

"I have been fortunate to find a new home at APIA and helping this team win the title is my main priority. However, the fact that we need to beat Sydney United will make it a little bit sweeter for me if we are to win."

Payne had one of his best performances of the season in APIA's 3-1 win against Sydney United 58 in Round 4 when he scored a

brilliant hat-trick in his first return to Edensor Park since joining APIA.

The 28-year-old is determined for a repeat of that performance at Bankwest Stadium on Grand Final day.

"Playing in a Grand Final is always exciting and that is no different this time around," Payne

"I'm feel really good heading into this match and can't wait to walk out onto the pitch with my kids at the start of the game.

"I've scored some really important goals for the team this season and I'm confident I can continue to score big goals for the team."

"It should be a great night for APIA and hopefully we can come home with the grand final victory this club has been waiting for."



SYDNEY UNITED 58 PLAYER FEATURE

SIM SETS SIGHTS ON SILVERWARE

by Nicholas Houghton

Sydney United 58 Star Matt Sim admits Sydney United 58's season has been less than conventional but the attacking midfielder is confident it won't stop them from an incredible championship title.

It's been a rollercoaster season for United 58 who have experienced huge highs and soul sapping lows but have found form when it matters most to secure a National Premier Leagues NSW Grand Final berth.

Adding further complication to their grand final journey is a crazy jam packed fixtures schedule which will have United 58 playing five games in 14 days including a crunch FFA Cup clash against Western Sydney Wanderers.



Sim, a former Wanderers and Central Coast Mariners player, has been a key player for United 58 this season playing a major role in turning the team around after they slumped to a streak of five games without a win.

The 31-year-old said United 58's crazy season is proof that anything can happen in football.

"If you looked at our results this year you wouldn't have thought this is a team who would have played in two cup finals as well as making it to the FFA Cup round of 16," Sim said.

"We have done things a little bit differently but at the end of the day it doesn't matter how you get there.

"If we win on Grand Final day nobody is going to remember that it wasn't the most perfect season or that we had a run of games without scoring a goal.

"It's cliché but you need to take it a game at a time and make the most of the opportunities as they arrive."

And that is exactly what United 58 has done to deliver a spectacular run in the finals to notch three spectacular upset wins to secure an unlikely finals berth.

An extra-time win against Marconi was followed up by a 7-3 extra time victory against Blacktown City, with last week's 2-1 comeback win against premiership winner Wollongong Wolves securing their place at Bankwest Stadium

Sim said it has been his side's never say day attitude which is the secret to their recent winning ways.

"Quite simply it is not in our nature to roll over when the going gets hard and we wanted to make the most of this opportunity to play finals football," he said

"One big advantage has been the high stakes of each game because it keeps you fired up and motivates you to perform.

"We are confident in our ability as players so no matter the situation we feel we have what it takes to win every game we play in."

An injury to key midfielder Glen Trifiro on the cusp of the finals series had many people write off United 58's chances.

However, Sim and Trifiro's midfield replacement Tariq Maia have spearheaded the Red's charge with plenty of goals and assists on their way to the grand final.

These two will be required to carry a lot of the load against APIA with Sim ready to lead his side to silverware.

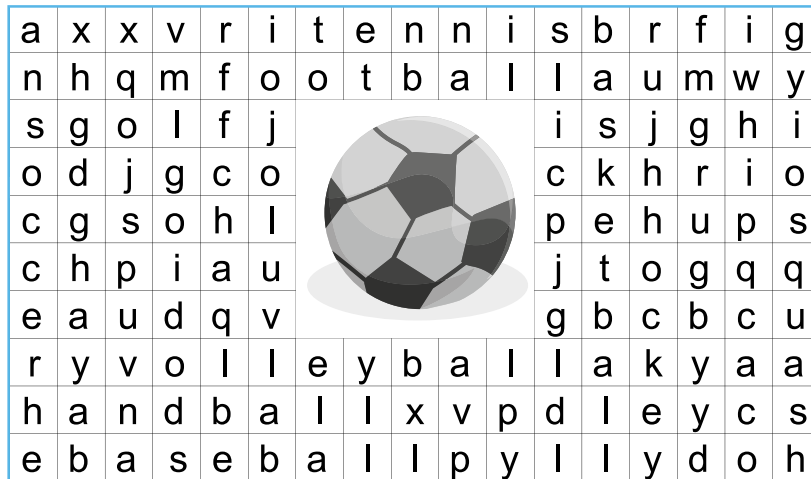
"It's always a great experience to play in a grand final so we will be doing everything we can to make the most of the experience," he said.

"We are a very strong team and although some people might see us as underdogs I'm confident we will cause another big surprise.

"It has been a while since Sydney United 58 has won the grand final so we'll be doing everything we can to give the fans what they've been waiting for."

For the Kids

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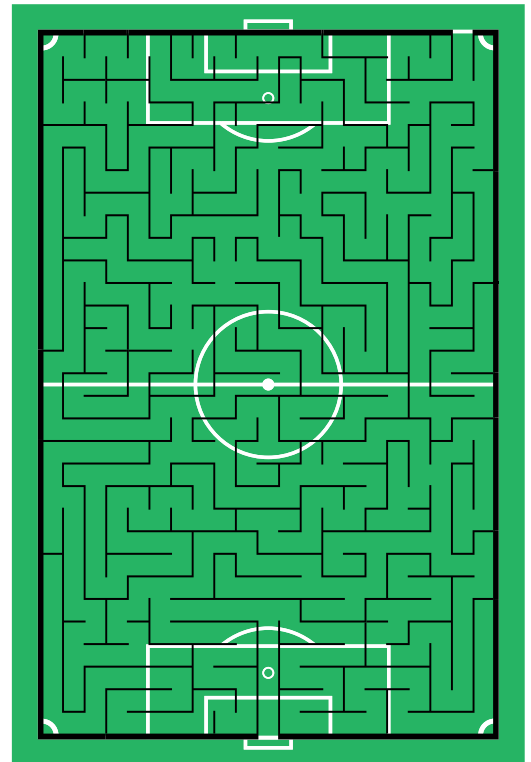
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AWARDS

ROBBIE SLATER MEDAL

The 'Robbie Slater Man of the Match' award was instigated to honour the tough tackling attacking midfielder as he spent his early years developing as a footballer in NSW before trekking off overseas to forge a successful footballing career abroad.

"I've got a huge history in NSW, especially as a footballer" says Slater.

"I grew up in the Bankstown area and commenced my career as a footballer with the Revesby Rovers and Revesby Workers before moving to Panania RSL then onto Auburn.

"Soon after that I played almost 100 matches for the St George Saints then went to the Blacktown City Demons and Sydney United in the old National Soccer League before I left for Belgium.

"You could certainly say that I spent my early life developing as a footballer in NSW, so to receive such an accolade was a huge honour indeed."

Born in Lancashire, England, the 46-year-old was delighted to have been given this honour by Football NSW as Slater holds a high regard for the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's competition.

"As I said earlier it's a huge honour and

quite humbling really to have been thought of for this.

"I have been involved with this since 2009 and have seen all the winners move onto bigger things which have seen various players take part in the Hyundai A-League and more.

"In my opinion the NPL NSW Men's competition has developed a number of current Hyundai A-League stars who have gone onto play higher whether it be abroad or for the Socceroos.

"The competition itself has evolved in many ways and that's also thanks to the FFA Cup.

"A number of the clubs taking part in the NPL NSW Men's competition were involved in the old

National Soccer League but I really believe that these clubs have played a huge role in way the Australian game has progressed.

"In my opinion the NPL NSW Men's has been seen as a pathway to the top for our many elite footballers at the present moment and is certainly an important competition in Australia."

The 'Robbie Slater Man of the Match' is presented at the conclusion of the NPL NSW Men's Grand Final.

PAST ROBBIE SLATER MAN OF THE MATCH WINNERS

2009 Blake Powell
Sutherland Sharks

2010 Tolgay Ozbey
Blacktown City FC

2011 Peter Triantis
Sydney Olympic

2012 Nathan Elasi
Marconi Stallions

2013 Alex Mansueto
Bonnyrigg White Eagles

2014 Kearyn Baccus
Blacktown City

2015 Chris Tadrosse
Bonnyrigg White Eagles

2016 Danny Choi
Blacktown City

2017 Dylan Mitchell
Manly United

2018 Alejandro Sanchez
Sydney Olympic



ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ
SYDNEY OLYMPIC

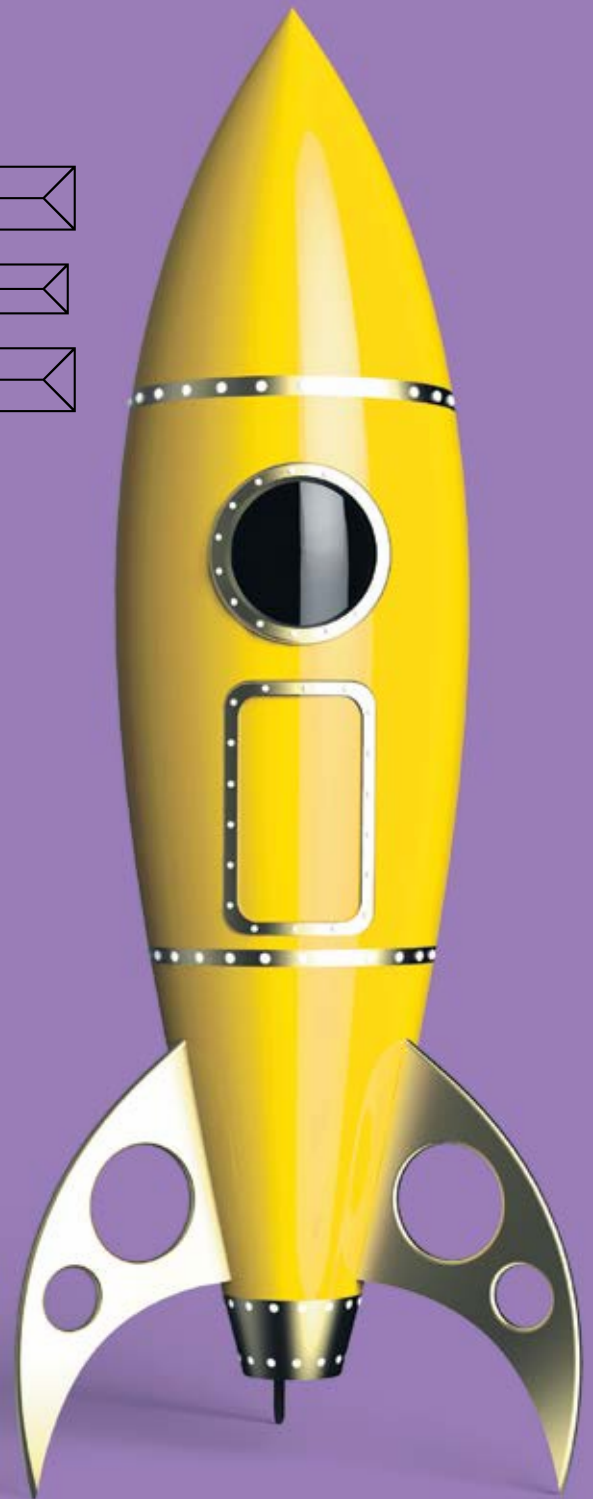
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