

KICKOFF

2022 NPL NSW MEN'S GRAND FINAL



NATIONAL
PREMIER LEAGUES
NSW



SATURDAY 27TH AUGUST • 6PM • COMMBANK STADIUM

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Brett Nielsen

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

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Football NSW team, it is an honour to welcome you all to CommBank Stadium for the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's 2022 Grand Final.

Today promises to be a blockbuster affair for all, and we are thrilled to host today's respective clubs, players, supporters, coaches and volunteers.

Following two COVID-19 affected seasons, we are delighted to be back at CommBank Stadium for the men's showpiece event. The Grand Final is the culmination of what has been an amazing NPL NSW season, with two proud clubs going toe-to-toe as Manly United entertain Blacktown City in the feature match.

Coached by Adam Griffiths, Manly United come into this match with the luxury of a one week break after defeating Premiers Sydney Olympic in the Major Semi Final. The team from the Northern Beaches have really shaken up this year's competition, and if the last two matches are anything to go by, we know for certain that they will be giving it their everything for the full ninety minutes (and beyond). The likes of Bruno Mendes, Matt Sim and James Oates will be just some of the players giving it their all today.

Blacktown City, coached by Mark Crittenden, have come through to the Grand Final the hard way. In week one of the finals, City were stunned by today's opponents in a heartbreaking 2-1 defeat in extra time. However, victories over APIA Leichhardt and Sydney Olympic put them in a position to fight for the Championship. With stars such as Travis Major, Danny Choi, Mario Shabow and the rise of young up and coming 17-year-old keeper Alex Robinson at their disposal, Blacktown will be pushing through all limits to clinch that coveted Championship trophy.



Stuart Hodge
Football NSW CEO

Congratulations to both teams as well as today's U20 representatives, Sydney FC and Mount Druitt Rangers FC, on making the 2022 Grand Final event. We wish all four teams the very best in today's matches.

A brief thank you to the Football NSW staff who have worked tirelessly over the entire season to ensure the successful operation and growth of our competitions, including the delivery of events like today.

A day like today is not possible without the support of Football NSW's partners. I would like to acknowledge Kappa, Pixellot, Wholesale Trophies and the Official Ball Sponsor for the 2022 NPL NSW Men's competition, MITRE, for their ongoing service to our game.

Finally, I would like to thank you, the fans, for your vital support. It has been a privilege to have you involved for another NPL NSW season and I hope you enjoy a fantastic day of football here at CommBank Stadium.

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- 5. Not engage in acts of discrimination, harassment or abuse towards any person, including:**
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 - b. the incitement of hatred or violence.**
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On some occasions, an injury can be serious (such as torn ligaments, dislocations, back injuries, concussion or broken bones). In very rare cases the injury can be life threatening or result in permanent disability. If a participant has a pre-existing injury, participating in a sporting activity could result in an exacerbation of that injury.

Participants could also suffer loss as a result of their personal property being lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed.

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**FOOTBALL
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U20'S TEAM LISTS

KICK-OFF 2.30PM



- 8 Kealey Adamson
- 9 Ben Gibson
- 10 Jaiden Kucharski
- 11 Oscar Gultekin
- 14 Ayouk Mow
- 15 Luka Smyth
- 16 Matthew Scarcella
- 18 Oscar Priestman
- 19 Joseph Calusic
- 20 Max Vartuli
- 25 Morrie Kamara
- 26 Aleksander Duricic
- 27 Dejan Bakrdanikoski
- 28 Louis Agosti
- 29 Alen Harbas
- 30 Adam Pavlesic
- 31 Nathan Paull
- 32 Andrew Vlahadamis
- 33 Zane Schreiber
- 37 Hayden Matthews
- 38 Brae Ovens

Coach: Matt Sim
Assistant Coach: Henry van Weeren
Team Manager: Jarek Pacholski
GK Coach: David Plowright
S&C Coach: Matt Said
Physiotherapist: Jeremy Abood



- 1 Omid Jan Ramezani
- 4 Elijah Uelese
- 5 Peter Nichols
- 16 Joshua Amadi
- 18 Olayinka Sunmola
- 24 Mabior Garang
- 27 Dimitris Theodorou
- 28 Jahnbek Bulut
- 29 Dieuseul Kandundaho
- 30 Jerome Narayan (GK)
- 31 Blake Steward
- 32 Jacob Micallef
- 34 Tom Ruperto
- 35 Rhys Osmond
- 36 Noah Panczyk
- 37 Tristian Vidic
- 38 Dimitris Theodorou
- 39 James Gray
- 41 Ivan Sunjic

Head Coach: Can Ozdemir
Goalkeeper Coach: Steven Allen
Physio: Kris Caloia
Team Manager: Jordan Ozedmir
Progressive Sports And Spinal
Physiotherapy

Referee: **Logan Jones** Assistant Referees: **Jackson Mackie and Eric Saba**

Fourth Official: **Brodie Merchant** Assessor: **James Barnes**

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MATCH PREVIEW

FIRST GRADE

The biggest game of the National Premier Leagues NSW Men's season is here - the Grand Final.

With 175 days between the first game of the 2022 season to the Grand Final, it's been a long road for both Manly United and Blacktown City to get here, in one of the most tightly-contested competitions in years.

Both having knocked out the 2022 Premiership winners, Sydney Olympic, throughout their finals campaign, the second and third highest ranked teams in the competition will come head to head for the fourth time this year to take out the Championship title.

Manly United's journey to the big dance hasn't been without its challenges, with Adam Griffiths' men battling through injuries and illness throughout the season.

Griffiths has instilled an incredible winning mentality within his team, which is full of talented and motivated footballers, many of whom are Manly locals.

While their side may be lacking some of the big names in the league, this group of players has managed to impress football fans with their disciplined and dynamic displays throughout the season.

Their winning mentality has been one of Griffiths' focuses throughout the season, and as he moves on to his next opportunity in the A-League at the season's end, a Grand Final trophy would be the perfect end to the former Socceroos time at Manly.

Among the talented cohort of Northern Beaches footballers is captain James Oates, who has had the incredible experience of playing Grand Finals at Wembley stadium to bring to the group as he leads them to the pinnacle of the season.

Oates has been a consistent source of strength within the team throughout the whole season, along with Alen Aganovic, who has had some sensational performances to bring a big impact when it matters.

Brazilian midfielder Bruno Mendes has also been a shining light within Manly's squad, as has Seiya Kambayashi, whose technical ability has been applauded by many throughout the five months of competition this year.

You cannot go by the experience of Matt Sim either, a player that can turn a match on its head and someone that could be that x-factor today.

While there are plenty of other exceptionally talented players within the Manly line up, their biggest asset so far this season has been their tenacity and grit, something they will need to



bring against the heavyweights that are Blacktown City.

The two sides have had three encounters so far this season, with some big score lines and exhilarating upsets keeping the competition between the teams well and truly alive.

Both teams have been praised for their impressive culture and commitment to excellence and while their coaches have quite different backgrounds and journeys to get to this point, they share the dedication to building the next generation of footballers and giving opportunities to those who have earned them.

Mark Crittenden has done just that throughout the season, rotating his talented squad to allow players to get their opportunity to shine.

Young 'keeper Alex Robinson stepped into the shoes of injured Tristan Prednargast and held his own throughout the season but it will be interesting to see if he keeps him or use Dylan Niski who has played the last few matches.

Striker Jordan Smylie has made quite the impact with 10 goals throughout the season and is one to watch out for while experienced talent like Daniel Collins, Grant Lynch, Mitchell Mallia, Mario Shabow and Matthew Lewis have continued to impress and have been critical in maintaining the composure of the team throughout the 25 weeks of competition.

The addition of Blacktown's favourite sons Travis Major and Danny Choi has been incredibly valuable in the back end of the season, as the talented players bring depth and experience to the team.

While Blacktown could have secured the Premiership with a win over Olympic in the final match of the regular season, they instead took the hard route and went up against Manly United in the first round of finals, falling to a late Aganovic double.

As the two teams match up again, they will both be looking to steer clear of repeating past mistakes in order to enjoy victory.

Both teams have the talent and the coaching expertise to be able to take a hold of the Grand Final match, with Griffiths able to draw on his experience as a player and Crittenden able to lean on his experience as one of the most respected coaches within the league.

Both teams are incredibly hungry to make their mark on the competition and savour the opportunity that is a Grand Final - something a lot of players will never experience, particularly as the league changes formats in 2023.

With their many similarities and many differences, it will be an exciting game as football fans wait to see who will be able to call themselves Champions in 2022.



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FIRST GRADE



- 2 Kieran Paull
- 3 Jesse Piriz
- 4 Jimmy Oates (C)
- 5 Tom Fay
- 6 James Georgaklis
- 7 Seiya Kambayashi
- 8 Dom Ferguson
- 9 Ben Koop
- 10 Luca Kmet
- 11 Matt Sim
- 12 Finn Ashton
- 14 Dejan Pandurevic
- 15 Kristian Santich
- 17 Daniel Fabrizio
- 18 Lucas Rainbird
- 19 Alen Aganovic
- 20 Jack Greenwood
- 21 Nick Rainbird
- 22 Bruno Mendes
- 24 Mitch Mattison

Head Coach: Adam Griffiths

Assistant Coach: Marty Judge

Goalkeeper Coach: Elvis Demarchi

Head Physio: Steve Felsher

Team Manager: Ida Rigoni

Lead Physio: Christian Bate

Strength and Conditioning: Alex Berger

*TEAM LISTINGS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

TEAM LISTS



- 1 Tristan Prendergast
- 3 Daniel Collins
- 4 Lachlan Campbell
- 5 Grant Lynch (C)
- 6 Matthew Lewis
- 7 Travis Major
- 8 Jak O'Brien
- 10 Mario Shabow
- 11 Mitchell Mallia
- 12 Tyren Burnie
- 15 Ryan Attard
- 14 Caleb Jackson-Brown
- 16 Ben Berry
- 17 Dakota Askew
- 18 Nicholas O'Brien
- 19 Adam Berry
- 20 Cayden Henderson
- 21 Charles Mendy
- 22 Carlos De Oliveira
- 23 Charles Eriku
- 24 Jackson Bandiera
- 30 Alex Robinson
- 32 Hiroaki Aoyama
- 40 Dylan Niski
- 45 Danny Choi
- 89 Jordan Smylie

Head Coach: Mark Crittenden

Assistant Coach: Matthew Bingley

Assistant Coach: John Carnevale

Team Manager: Graham Crawhall

*TEAM LISTINGS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Referee: **Hassan Jomaa** Assistant Referees: **Cameron Wright and Emma Kocbek**

Fourth Official: **Michael Weiner** Assessor: **Richard Baker**





KEY PLAYERS



BRUNO MENDES

The Brazilian maestro in midfield has been in impeccable form this year and his silky skills and eye for goal will be there for all to be seen as the Samba King from the Northern Beaches looks towards making headlines at today's NPL NSW Men's Grand Final.

SEIYA KAMBAYASHI

The Japanese star has been the engine room for Manly United's successful 2022 season. With his bombing raids from defence to midfield to attack as well as the ability to close down his opponents, Kambayashi has been seen as one of the club's most dangerous players.



JAMES OATES

A captain leads by example and that's been the case for Manly's skipper James Oates.

Having kept things watertight in Manly's defence as well as coordinating his troops from the back, Oates has been one tough defender to crack all season.



KEY PLAYERS



TRAVIS MAJOR

There's not much big bad Travis Major cannot do for his beloved Blacktown City club.

The fan favourite has been in scintillating form since returning from his overseas journey and has been Blacktown City's hitman up-front.

A character on and off the pitch, Major is the heart and soul of Blacktown City.

MARIO SHABOW

A factor in Blacktown City's good run this year has come down to the ability of their crafty attacking midfield craftsman Mario Shabow.

His aggression along with his quality on the ball has been a sight to see during City matches this year.



GRANT LYNCH

Labelled as one of the most consistent defenders for the past several seasons, City defender Grant Lynch has had terrific 2022 season.

His ability to play from the back as well as his determination to win at all costs has seen him rise as one of Mark Crittenden's most important and influential players on the pitch.



PLAYER COMMENTS



JAMES OATES

On Sealing Their Grand Final Spot

We were so up against it going into that game against Olympic, so to get the result, everyone was just sort of blown away and completely fired up.

Now things have settled a little bit, we're focusing on getting the result and not just participating in the final, we really want to win it.

I've played in I didn't probably five or six Grand Finals, maybe the last couple and probably the biggest didn't go well.

On How a Grand Final at CommBank Compares to Wembley

There was one at Wembley, where we were the heavy favourites and we scored in the first couple minutes so we thought it'd be a walkover, and then we ended up getting smashed 4-1.

They're all learning experiences and hopefully I can bring that to the lads' attention and just let them know that they can't take it for granted.

It's really special, to play it in a big stadium means more...there's nothing like playing under bright lights and in a big, fairly new stadium.

On Two Sensational Finals Finishes

We've always believed in ourselves, but those two results in particular just give us that extra bit of belief and I don't think we would have got that result against Olympic if we didn't do what we did with Blacktown.



MATT SIM

On the Grand Final Mentality

After this, it's all over so there's no point leaving anything in the tank, worrying about next week or what could be and what could have happened, it needs to happen now and that's the kind of mentality you need around the game.

You've got to enjoy the build up and the opportunity to play in these games, they are very hard to get to. I've been very lucky enough to be a part of some good teams that have got there, but it's not something that is a given in football.

I know a lot of players who can go a long period of time and not make one, so you've got to really enjoy it and try to get out there and just give your best and don't leave anything in the tank and don't die wondering.

On Never Giving Up

It hasn't been easy for us the whole way through, we've had a pretty challenging sort of year in terms of injuries and the biggest thing is that everyone in the squad, no matter who it is that has been called upon, has done their job.

That's kind of the way that we play, we just never think we're out of it even when we went 1-0 against Sydney Olympic, there was still that belief there to go get something out of the game.

These kinds of games suit our mentality because we won't stop until it's over and we'll hopefully put our best foot forward for this game.

On Appreciating the Grand Final Moment

When I left Sydney United 58 this year, it was a pretty sustained period of success there and I was really lucky to be a part of that.

When I came to Manly I had to have that mentality again, that was what I was looking for.

When I spoke to Griff [Adam Griffiths] and seeing and knowing some of the other boys and seeing who else they were bringing in I was like, "oh there's a real opportunity here to do it again."

Speaking to some of the other boys they never thought they'd play in one again, or the ones that haven't played in it before didn't think they'd get there.



GRANT LYNCH

On the Journey to the Grand Final

We made it hard for ourselves, we had a poor performance when we played Olympic last time and we wanted to come out and make it right.

It's my first Grand Final in six years here so I'm very, very excited.

On Enjoying the Grand Final Moment

You definitely can't take these moments for granted.

You've just got to take every moment in this competition, it's a very hard competition.

All the teams are so close heading towards the back end of the year, so I'm gonna enjoy every moment.

On the Blacktown City Environment

The team dynamic is super important and it's something that Critto [Mark Crittenden] has built in this team over the time he's been here.

It's an incredibly good group, we're very, very close, we'll go out together and there's a lot of social related stuff. We think it's important, it helps us when we're trying to battle in those games and those really hard moments and it's incredibly rewarding.

I'm very, very happy to be in such a great environment.



MITCHELL MALLIA

On Persevering To Get to the Grand Final

We did take the long way to the final but the spirits are high.

We've kept grinding no matter what the result is and we've taken every game as it comes and the luck fell our way tonight and hopefully it continues next Saturday.

On Grand Final Preparation

We're trying to just stay focused, not trying to get ahead of ourselves or get overwhelmed with the situation.

We've just been taking every training session seriously, we have a game plan and we've been sticking to it and it will be the same deal come Saturday.

On Grand Finals Compared to Regular Matches

The nerves probably set in a few days before.

It's the last Grand Final of a competition as well so it will go down in history.

We're trying not to get too overwhelmed, it is just a normal game at the end of the day, but we know there's a lot at stake and we'll be working hard to lift the trophy.

TALE OF THE TAPE - THE ROAD TO THE FINALS

2022 ENCOUNTERS

ROUND 8 BLACKTOWN CITY 3 – MANLY UNITED 1

Jordan Smylie stole the headlines in Round 8 with a brace that ultimately decided Blacktown City's professional 3-1 win over Manly United at Blacktown City Sports Centre.

Smylie was joined by Hiroaki Aoyama and Manly skipper Jimmy Oates on the scoresheet as Round 8's 'Match of the Round' fell the way of Mark Crittenden's men, giving them the advantage in the first leg of the competition.



ROUND 19 MANLY UNITED 1 - BLACKTOWN CITY 6

It was the travelling Blacktown City FC who crashed Manly United's 'Back to Manly' day after a thrashing 6-1 victory at Cromer Park in Round 19.

Goals to Lachlan Campbell, Grant Lynch, Jak O'Brien, Travis Major, Mario Shabow and an own goal from Jimmy Oates all but cancelled out Alen Aganovic's goal in the first half in what was a massive victory for Mark Crittenden and his troops.

The result sent out a stark warning to fellow rival NPL NSW Men's sides that Blacktown City meant business and gave a frank wake up call to Manly United, who needed to pick up their game for any hope of finals.

FINALS WEEK 1 MANLY UNITED FC 2 – BLACKTOWN CITY FC 1

In one of the most enthralling contests of the season, Manly United progressed to the Major Semi-Final after two last minute Alen Aganovic headers stole victory from Blacktown City after 120 minutes of football at Cromer Park.

The battle went to extra time as both sides failed to get on the scoreboard after 90 minutes, with Blacktown City breaking ahead in the 102nd minute as Mallia Mallia released an exquisite half volley that flew low and hard into the bottom right hand corner.

Manly United's Alen Aganovic tapped in an equaliser in the 119th minute and it looked as if the game would go to penalties, with Mark Crittenden making a goalkeeper sub for the occasion. However, the hosts secured a miraculous winner with one of the final kicks of the game, again through Aganovic, who headed home sensationally.

COACHES COMMENTS



ADAM GRIFFITHS

On the Challenges of the Season

We've had a really roller coaster season in terms of players availability, I don't think I've had a full-strength squad the whole season, but credit to all the players, everyone's played their part and I think we fully deserve to be in the Grand Final.

I don't think people realise how many players we have had unavailable and still have unavailable, but we've got a good core group of players and they've done exceptionally well the whole season and it's a credit to them.

On the Belief Within the Squad

There's a lot of belief within the team now, especially after the last couple of weeks performances, that we can match anyone and go toe to toe with them and take on any team that comes up against us.

There are some remarkable players within the team in terms of mentality and I've tried to instil that within the team to have that serial winning mentality and the last five weeks we've really had that.

On Grand Finals as a Coach Compared to as a Player

I take a lot of my own experience of playing in the Grand Final as a player when we won it with Newcastle Jets a long time ago. I take a lot of those memories and those experiences leading up to the game and we want to make this week a special week so that it feels different.

The Club is behind all of the little things that we're doing leading up to the game to make sure that the players know that it's a big game, it's a big day and we're not in the final, we're going to win the final.



MARK CRITTENDEN

On the Opportunity To Win Some Silverware

We've got the opportunity now to go on and win it, we were probably going to go pretty close last year and thankfully now we get a chance to maybe have a bit of joy.

On Preparing the Team for the Grand Final

We're not going to get any fitter anymore so we probably won't do too much before probably Thursday after another 120 minute game.

It'll be a light one, probably have a swim on Tuesday and maybe a feed and then have to have a good chat on Thursday.

On Taking On Manly for a Fourth Time in 2022

Finals are different. Last time we played Manly we led 1-0 for all bar 60 seconds of the game and we got beat so finals are totally different and it's a Grand Final too, so it's a totally different game again.

PLAYER FEATURE

MENDES MAGIC READY TO UNLEASH



Brazilian Bruno Mendes has made his mark on the league in 2022, with his high calibre technical skills giving plenty to the midfield of Manly United.

The season for the Northern Beaches outfit hasn't been without its challenges, but Mendes has relished the experience of playing for his 'local' club, having lived in the area since he came to Australia.

Enjoying the culture and the camaraderie between the squad this year, Mendes has nothing but good things to say about his teammates and coaching staff who have all performed their roles to help get the club to the Grand Final.

Praising the defensive performance of the side, Mendes explained the connection between their defence and attack in relation to the type of gameplay coach Adam Griffiths implemented.

"I think we worked pretty hard defensively, maybe we had the best defence of the whole competition, which helped us perform in attack," he explained.

"I think we were very consistent in the back and if you see our scores, not many of them were very large.

"We won a lot of games without scoring too many goals, maybe that's what cost us the competition because we lost by goal difference.



"Griff [Adam Griffiths] likes to play very attacking football, he likes to have the ball, likes to have a very good reaction, which means as soon as we lose the ball he wants us to react straight away to get the ball back.

"I'd say it is kind of his style of play to defend well, and not let the other team have much of the ball, have time to build up and then we can create something else.

After a less than fairytale finish for the season, being beaten to the Premiership by the slimmest of goal differences by Sydney Olympic, Mendes and the whole Manly United team are savouring the moment of their Grand Final qualification.

"The feeling is unbelievable," Mendes said of securing the first Grand Final spot.

"We wanted to win the competition, and after the last game we felt that we could but we couldn't.

"It was very frustrating for all of us because we won the game with a good score against a very good club, Rockdale, but after the game no one could celebrate the victory because we knew that we should have scored one more to win the Premiership.

"It was kind of disappointing, but at the same time it pushed us to keep working hard to make the Grand Final and of course try to get the victory so it was extra motivation for us the way that they ended."

Manly certainly picked up momentum and strengthened their winning mentality after the final match, with an incredible last minute win against Blacktown City in the first round of the finals.

"It was a roller coaster because we were thinking the game was nearly done with two minutes to finish," Mendes said.

"We managed to score and get to a draw with a beautiful header from Alen Aganovic and then literally one minute later, we got a free kick and the same guy scored again.

"He's been very consistent, not just in the back but we've worked a lot on set pieces and he's a legend and it was very good that he managed both of these goals.

"One week later, pretty much the same thing happened.

"We couldn't score the second one but just to tie up the game in the last minute again just shows the character of the team and the never say die mentality - we keep pushing into the end no matter what.

"In this league if you don't keep consistent like focus until the last whistle you can be punished or you can punish someone. You have to keep 100% focused until the game is finished, and it's pretty exciting."

With the excitement of the Grand Final taking over the Manly change rooms and training ground, the players have enjoyed the week off in the lead up to the big dance and can't wait to get onto the pitch.

"Everyone is pretty pumped up.

"It's good to have a weekend off because we played two games of 120 minutes each.

"It's a lot for the legs with a few injuries throughout the whole season, so it's good for us to have this time off to relax a bit but of course keep working hard, keep training hard."

PLAYER FEATURE



BLACKTOWN CITY PRIDE AS MAJOR CHASES ANOTHER CHAMPIONSHIP VICTORY

Travis Major knows all about winning NPL NSW Men's Championships with Blacktown City as he enters his fifth Grand Final appearance.

Having won the league's big prize in 2010, 2014 and 2016 but missing out in 2015, Major would love nothing more than to add to his already full silverware tally which also includes a Player of the Year award.

"Of course, any footballer knows that winning Premierships and Championships is something we all wish to do in our lifetime, and I am grateful I've won three out of four so far.

"Our club always prides itself on being one of the best NPL NSW Men's teams so for us to be back here again is a true validation on how strong this club is.

"Equally, it be great to win this and see our Club Legend Matty Lewis lift the Championship trophy as I know how much it would mean to him, so all the boys want to get it done for him also."

The 32-year-old Blacktown City fan favourite has been in scintillating form once again after signing on with Mark Crittenden's squad late in the season following a stint in India.

The ace marksman has managed to score seven goals in as many matches and is hungry to add to that tally against Manly United in the big dance.

"The most important thing we want to do is win but scoring goals is a bonus and I will be doing all that I can to hit that back of the net at CommBank Stadium.

"Manly United will no doubt be tough nut to crack, they had the best defensive record this year for a reason.

"Jimmy (Oates) leads them well from the back and they all work hard for each other.

"Up front they've got experience in boys like Simmy and a couple good foreigners such as Bruno (Mendes) and Seiya (Kambayashi) who are a handful, but we've played 3 times this year winning two and losing one, so we are both familiar with how each other play and expect there to be hopefully plenty of goals again."

Major hopes that a sea of black will be on hand to witness he and his fellow Blacktown City troops do the business against a never-say-die Manly United side.

"We know we don't have the most fans in the competition, but they all count so it be great to see as many as possible at CommBank Stadium in pushing us for victory.

"It be amazing to see them all dressed in black to support us hopefully seeing us lift that trophy we set out to do at the start of this season."



TEAM OF THE YEAR

The wait is finally over, the 2022 National Premier Leagues NSW Men's Team of the Year has officially been announced in what has been a stellar season for all clubs and players involved in the state's Premier competition.

As it has been traditionally done for the past fourteen seasons, Football NSW journalists have been awarding their 3,2,1 player ratings for each of the respective 131 matches played in the regular NPL NSW Men's season.

Unfortunately, we've had the issue of two interrupted seasons due to COVID-19 but thankfully 2022 allowed us to play a full compliment of matches which has brought back this popular segment.

The below is a starting eleven and substitutes line-up that is sure to threaten any side across Australia both at state and A-League level.

Blacktown City FC's Alex Robinson has been one of the finds of the season. The Springwood resident hit huge heights after taking charge of a heavy number 1 keeper number following Tristan Prendergast's season ending injury during preseason this year. Although a tough loss, City moved on with Robinson announcing himself to the NPL family that at 17, he had what it took to be one of the best. His fantastic performances caught the attention of the Young Socceroos coaching unit and has since been invited to a training camp hoping to crack a permanent national team spot. Another long list of high-quality keepers coming through the City ranks hoping to emulate one of their greatest in Matt Ryan.

Manly United's great season has come down to a few players but none more so than captain Jimmy Oates. The 31-year-old was in red-hot form not only by marshalling his fellow defensive troops in keeping clean sheets but also scoring important goals having popped up four times this season. His experience and calmness led to Manly having the best defensive record of the league only conceding 24 goals all year.

On the theme of captains, Sydney Olympic's Michael Glasscock also stood out in what was a superb year for the former NSL giants. Glasscock led his Blues to Premiership glory and that was thanks to a big season from the 22-year-old who will only get better as the years progress.

Rounding up the trio defensive unit was a familiar NPL NSW Men's figure in APIA's tall timber, Themba Muata-Marlow. The 28-year-old has been one of the league's most consistent defenders for the last several seasons and 2022 showed that he was still hungry for more success having put on some impressive performances that earned him 'Man of the Match' plaudits keeping things tight at the back.

Following in his father's footsteps Angelo who was a prominent player at the Marconi club during the NSL era, 20-year-old livewire midfielder Domenic Costanzo quite truly was one of the pick ups of the 2022 season. Costanzo was a constant pest for opposing sides and proved deadly on set-pieces combined with his trickery that saw him rise as one of the Stallions' most potent weapons.

Three quality import players then made up the rest of what was a highly talented midfield line-up.

Manly United's Brazilian maestro Bruno Mendes created a storm with his samba skills, flair and ability on the ball that made it tough for opponents to tackle the 28-year-old attacking midfielder. Having featured in a number of the 'Goal of the Week' segments, finding the net was never an issue for this star who finished up with 12 goals for the season.

Mendes was able to run the Manly United midfield because of his fellow partner in crime in Japanese star Seiya Kambayashi who was the engine room of Adam Griffiths' side. Having originally signed



on as an attacking defender, the 24-year-old's ability was then seen in midfield, and it was there he showed more of his class and was statistically noted as the player who had the most touches on the ball in this year's NPL NSW Men's competition.

Finally, APIA Leichhardt FC's prized U.S star Jason Romero was in a league of his own. The 27-year-old was the assist king of the NPL NSW Men's competition coming in hot with 11 for the season while bagging 11 goals if you don't mind. Another player who oozes style, class and finesse with the ball, he was a joy to watch as he took the NPL NSW Men's league by storm after playing a few seasons in the tier below.

The NPL NSW Men's competition was blessed with some quality strikers this year and the first player that seemed to grab the headlines each week was the league's newly crowned Golden Boot winner, former A-League star, and Irishman Roy O'Donovan. The 36-year-old played an integral role in bringing the Premiership back to Belmore thanks to his 21 goal haul this season in his first year with the club. You can't buy experience and the Irishman used that and more in his drive and determination to win matches at all costs as he instantly became an Olympic fan favourite.

Ilinden may have had a disappointing end to its 2022 season failing to make the finals but one player that once again stood up was ace marksman Alec Uroevski. The 'Baker' delivered in style this year as he almost grabbed the golden boot but was beaten on the last day with 20 goals. The 28-year-old has become one of the most consistent goalscorers this competition has ever seen having scored some spectacular ones along the way which is why he's gained the reputation of being Rockdale's number one threat.

Wrapping up the 'Team of the Year', the league was blessed to see yet another shining rising star utilise the NPL NSW Men's competition as a platform to spearhead his footballing journey with 20-year-old Jaideen Kucharski getting the spot. The Sydney FC gun striker was tremendous for Jimmy Van Weeren's men and proved to be a handful for opposing defenders. Hitting the back of the net 18 times, it came as no surprise to us all the young gun finally cemented a full-time first grade contract in Steve Corica's squad thanks to his superb performances.

Special mentions to Ilinden keeper David Bradasevic, Stallions' bearded assassin Marko Jesic, Mt Druitt Town Rangers star striker Jack Stewart, Wolves front man Lachlan Scott, Blacktown City's reliable defender Grant Lynch and Olympic midfielder Darcy Burgess for earning spots on the substitutes list.

Congratulations to everyone who won selection into this year's NPL NSW Men's Team of the Year.

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 so many of our 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 Australia 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 and is voted by the Football NSW Media Unit.



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

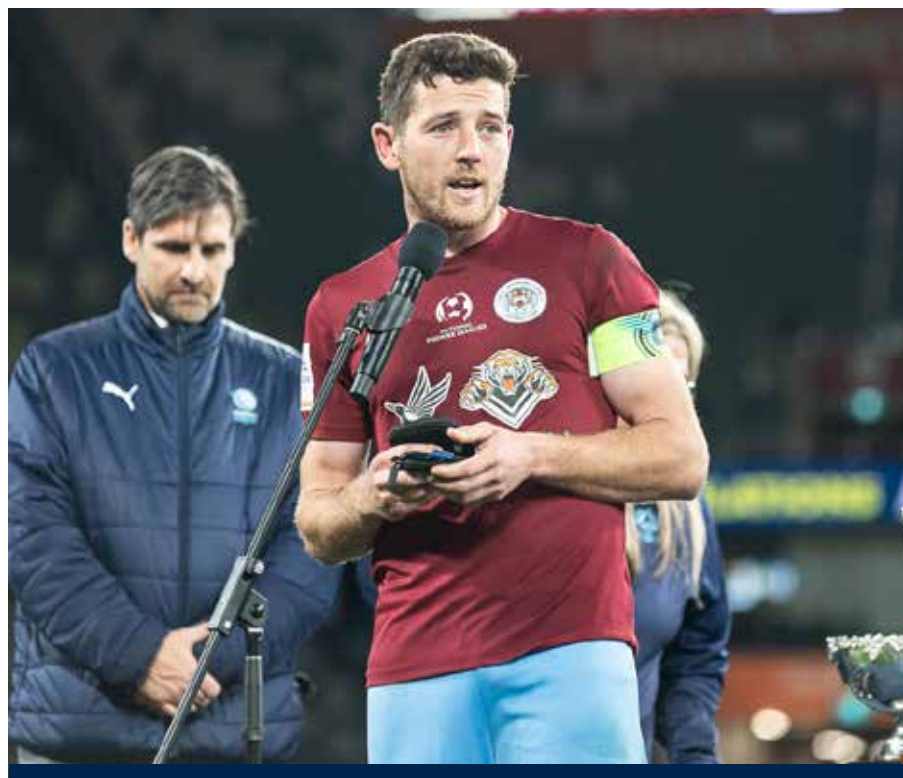
2015 Chris Tadrosse
Bonnyrigg White Eagles

2016 Danny Choi
Blacktown City

2017 Dylan Mitchell
Manly United

2018 Alejandro Sanchez
Sydney Olympic

2019 Sean Symons
APIA Leichhardt FC





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