



NSW Premier League Grand Final preview

The final act of the 2011 NSW Premier League season takes place on Monday the 3rd of October as two clubs with a massive history draw swords at Belmore Sports Ground.

A promotional poster for the NSW Premier League Grand Final. At the top left is the Football NSW logo. To its right is the NSW Premier League logo with the website www.nswpl.com.au. The main text reads "MONDAY 3RD OCTOBER" in large white letters on a blue background. Below this, the Sydney Olympic FC logo (a blue shield with a soccer ball and two stars) is on the left, and the Sydney United FC logo (a shield with a soccer ball and checkered pattern) is on the right, with "VS" in large white letters between them. At the bottom, it says "GRAND FINAL" in large white letters, followed by "SYDNEY OLYMPIC FC VS SYDNEY UNITED FC" and "BELMORE SPORTS GROUND" in smaller white letters. At the very bottom, the website www.sydneyolympicfc.com is on the left, "3PM" in a blue box is in the center, and www.sydneyunited.com.au is on the right.

The competition's top two sides kept true to the regular season's findings as Premiers Sydney Olympic again line-up against Sydney United following the Reds' dramatic 4-2 defeat of Blacktown City FC.



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The Reds were forced to dig deep against the reigning champions last Monday, using their experience to overpower Blacktown in the final 20' minutes. Jean Paul De Marigny's men proved unyielding with a strong second-half defensive display, meanwhile the men up-front were full of energy in creating chances. In the end, exceptional strikes by Mitchell Thompson and Ufuk Talay proved enough to secure the Reds another shot at the Premiers, a chance Luka Glavas & Co. will be keen to grasp with both hands.

Sydney Olympic's preparation for the final has been impressive, with a win over A-League side Sydney FC and an impeccable showing in the Major semi-final against the Reds demonstrating their ability.

The two sides have met three times this season with the Blues holding a 2-1 head-to-head record. An equally entertaining 3-2 win at Sydney United Sports Centre kick-started the Blues season, though the Reds exacted some revenge in Round 19 with a very impressive 4-2 win at Belmore. The most recent outing at Belmore saw Sydney Olympic hit the accelerator with a very proficient showing.

Both sides' abilities in the attacking third propose an entertaining battle on Monday with Sydney Olympic's front-line to be led by influential striker Alex Smith. The England-born front-man possesses a great touch of the ball, tremendous aerial strength and a keen eye for the back of the net. Backed by the likes of Robbie Mileski, Chris Triantis and Phil Makrys from midfield, the Reds defensive line will need to be on their game.

The Blues' have conceded little in defence all season, apart from a drop in form at the back end of the campaign that included the 2-4 loss to Sydney United. Brett Studman and Richard Luksic are immovable at the back – something Luka Glavas will be hoping to overcome following the little time he on the ball in the Major semi-final.

Sydney Olympic have also shown their dead-ball creativity, and in a tense grand-final showdown, Chris Triantis, Makrys and Mileski have all shown their flair from the set-piece.

Mark Rudan and Michael Cindric will be given the job of marshalling the Reds defensive line with the flanks expected to be worked by Tomislav Mijic and Mitchell Spear.

Sydney United's ability to quickly turn defence into attack arises from the work rate of captain Ivo Bosnar. The screening of the defensive line, and exceptional skill on the ball, allows the Reds to quickly get the ball forward to Steve Hayes who has been instrumental for Sydney United this season. Hayes' understanding with the likes of Glavas, Ben Vidaic and Elsid Barkhousir has grown throughout the season, and when these men are on their game, the Reds are unstoppable.

Glavas will carry the weight of expectation in the goal scoring department, though with potential match winners throughout their squad, Sydney United will be out to attack from the opening whistle on Monday.

In what promises to be an entertaining battle between two sides that have stuck to their attacking football philosophies all season, a memorable encounter is anticipated at Belmore Sports Ground. Encounters between these two sides stem back to the NSL days, and the passion and support of those days are expected to be re-lived on Monday.

-By Joseph Carlucci



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