



## ***Sydney United battle to victory over Wolves***

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### **Sydney United maintained their grip on second position on the NSW Premier League table with a hard fought 2-1 victory over a stubborn South Coast Wolves on Sunday afternoon.**

Mark Picciolini scored on the break to give the home side the lead on the half hour mark before Ben Vidaic found an equaliser on the stroke of half-time. Elsid Barkousir completed the scoring early in the second period as the visitors held on for victory on a slippery surface at John Crehan Park. Both sides looked to get an early lead as Steve Hayes headed over Ufuk Talay's corner for United before Sasho Petrovski powered his free-kick over the crossbar for Wolves in the opening minutes.

United earned themselves half a dozen corners in the opening quarter of an hour only to be denied on each occasion by resolute defending from the home side. Luka Glavas threatened on the break and was denied by a strong last ditch sliding challenge by Jacob Timpano who put in an impressive shift in the heart of defence. Vidaic went close midway through the first-half, drawing a fine diving save from Brody Crane before heading over Talay's ensuing corner.

Despite United holding momentum it was the home side that opened the scoring just before the half hour mark as a result of a superbly executed counterattack combined with an uncharacteristic error from Vedran Janjetovic in the United goal. Andres Gomez released Jake Duczynski in acres of space on the left flank; the big holding midfielder's low cross skipped under Janjetovic, gifting Picciolini the simplest of finishes to break the deadlock. Now with the lead, Wolves continued to keep United's attack at bay as great pressure from Jack Keating forced Vidaic to blast a clear chance well over the crossbar after Mitchell Spear found the striker in the box.

Crane did well to beat Vidaic to a dangerous through ball soon after, however his clearance was intercepted by Talay, whose 40-yard effort was cut out on the six yard box by Timpano who did well to race back and cover his goalkeeper. Timpano was in the thick of it once again minutes later, sliding along the edge of the box to produce a fantastic block to deny Glavas once again. United grabbed an equaliser shortly before the interval after the Wolves defence failed to clear Glavas' cross, allowing Vidaic enough space to level the scores with a powerful finish.

The visitors emerged from the sheds hungry for goals in the second-half with Talay and Hayes missing the target from range before Vidaic was denied by a timely challenge from Duczynski. United were finally able to capitalise from the set piece on 55' minutes as Anthony Golec flicked on Talay's corner to find Barkousir lurking at the rear post; the striker produced a clinical volley to put his team into the lead. Glavas looked to double United's advantage soon after, cutting in from the left wing only to place his shot straight into the safe hands of Crane. Picciolini went close to equalising midway through the second-half as substitute Tayfun Buyokkopru found him on the edge of United's goal box, however the striker dragged his shot wide of goal.



Timpano produced yet another crucial last man challenge in the closing minutes to deny substitute Daniel Rezo and keep Wolves in the hunt for an equaliser. Wolves went painfully close to levelling the scores in added time only to be denied by desperate defending from United, with Anthony Golec blocking substitute John Martinovski's shot on the goal line to maintain United's advantage as they held on for the win.

South Coast Wolves coach Trevor Morgan was disappointed to have lost this afternoon's fixture after his side's solid defensive performance: "We thought the best plan for us was to try and mirror their formation – so we did that – which is a change for us," said Morgan. "We tried to keep the game as tight as possible and allow them very few chances. Obviously we wanted to try not concede; we got ourselves 1-0 up and then to concede on half time was unfortunate. I think Sydney United had to work for their win."

Aside from an opening day thumping by Sydney Olympic, Morgan's side have come to within a goal of matching teams at the opposite end of the NSW Premier League table time and time again, just as they did this afternoon: "It's been a season where we play against the big guns and always lose 2-1," said Morgan. "This time was a better effort; not our best football. But I didn't expect that when we're focussing on trying to make the game tight for the other team and you could see in the last 20 minutes we were still well in the game. I wish we got more out of it," Morgan reflected.

Sydney United midfielder Steve Hayes was happy to come away with three points in a hard fought match: "Their goal came on the counterattack and caught us off guard," said Hayes. "It was a bit of a battle and it was good to get the three points today. We're slowly coming into pretty good form. We haven't lost a game in a while now so I think the key thing is to keep on rolling and keep things moving and we'll only progress forward if we can."

Having come from behind to snare victory, Hayes believes it was United's experience that got them over the line: "I think one thing that really helped us is our experience in keeping the ball," said Hayes. "I think we held more possession and we created a few more chances. They could have scored one or two off the counter again so it was a game that could have gone either way. But I think we had the dominance of possession and deserved the win in the end," Hayes concluded.

*The afternoon's Grade-20 fixture saw Sydney United also come from behind to defeat South Coast Wolves by a 3-1 score line.*

#### **Match Stats**

**South Coast Wolves 1** (Mark Picciolini 29')

**Sydney United 2** (Ben Vidaic 44', Elsid Barkhousir 55')

**Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**John Crehan Park, Cringila**

**Referee:** Strebre Delovski

**Assistant Referees:** Adam Coombes and Nathan Wotton

**Fourth Official:** Matthew Cropper

**South Coast Wolves:** 1. Brody Crane; 22. Zac Freeburn, 3. Dave Abel, 4. Jacob Timpano, 2. Alex Mansueto, 12. Jack Keating (16. John Martinovski 83'), 13. Stjepan Paric (18. Jared Fish 56'), 6. Jake Duczynski (15. Tayfun Buyokkopru 59'), 8. Andres Gomez, 9. Mark Picciolini, 10. Sasho Petrovski

**Substitutes Not Used:** 11. Chris Nathaniel, 20. Sam Nastic

**Yellow Cards:** Brody Crane 84'

**Red Cards:** Nil

**Sydney United:** 1. Vedran Janjetovic; 3. Mitchell Spear, 5. Anthony Golec, 4. Michael Cindric, 8. Shane Lyons,



10.Steve Hayes, 19.Mitchell Thompson (14.Petar Markovic 70'), 15.Ufuk Talay, 9.Elsid Barkousir (12.Matthew Bilic 90'), 13.Ben Vidaic (18.Daniel Rezo 73'), 11.Luka Glavas

**Substitutes Not Used:** 38.Tom Mijic, 20.Ryan Norval

**Yellow Cards:** Nil

**Red Cards:** Nil

*-By Michael Shoolman*



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