

# THE SOCCER POST

A publication of the Manly Warringah Football Association



**MANLY WARRINGAH**  
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

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## TeleChoice Premier League action returns

Each of the twelve clubs will aim to throw themselves back into the competition – the Easter Break a great opportunity for sides to rest players and gain some perspective - after the fast and furious start to the season.

Three sides that will be hoping the Easter pause will change their fortunes are undoubtedly regular title contenders Bankstown City, Blacktown City Demons and Marconi Stallions – the three bottom-placed sides in the competition.

Each of these sides will this week be in action on Saturday evening, respectively at home and under immense pressure to secure three-points.

Blacktown City will have the most difficult of obstacles, as Milan Blagojevic's Sydney Olympic visit Gabbie Stadium. The Demons were far from impressive in the 3-0 defeat dished out by A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers. Ken Schembri was far from impressed by his side's showing in what has become a disastrous run for the club – even at this early stage in the season.

Sydney Olympic will again be looking at the exploits of Shannon Cole who has been in terrific form to-date.

The speedy winger has also cemented his name as one of the best 'dead-ball specialists' in the competition – repeatedly finding the back of the net with his impressive free-kicks.

Bankstown City's task is slightly easier, as Peter Tsekenis' men face another team struggling in this early part of the season.

Paul Carter's 'new boys' – Macarthur Rams – have failed to ignite thus far in the campaign, though Bankstown City's job at hand will be made difficult due to the number of players out through suspension. Phil Makrys and Steve Liavas will be absent, as will player/coach Tsekenis.

Marconi Stallions' meeting with Penrith-Nepean United will be a 'Final' of sorts for the Stallions. For the first time, in recent memory, the Stallions are sitting in bottom-spot – on goal difference.

David Barrett's team has failed to ignite with new signings Tolgay Ozbey and Tallan Martin still to find their scoring boots.

Penrith-Nepean has been one of the most impressive sides to-date, following a disastrous 2007 campaign.

Abbas Saad has brought great belief to his side, something that has been evident since Round 1.

The 'Match of the Round' takes place at Seymour Shaw where first meets second in the Sutherland Sharks v Sydney United clash.

The Sharks have been flawless in the early part of the season with some great results and equally impressive football on display.

Brian Brown has hit a winner in this first part of the campaign, as the likes of Brad Boardman, Brendan Gan and Shane Lyons have really hit their straps. Sutherland has yet to lose a match over ninety-minutes – pre-season included – summing up the confidence amongst the group.

The Sharks warmed up to this week's big match after defeating Super League outfit St George 5-0 to pick up their first silverware for 2008 taking out the Leader Charity Challenge last Saturday.

Sydney United too remain unbeaten in the competition, despite a less than impressive Round 4 defeat of West Sydney Berries.

The Reds will need to raise their performance considerably in-order to stand any chance against the Sharks, though much of the side's success will depend upon the service Luka Glavas and Elsid Barkhousir receive up-front.

The reliable pairing of Todd Brodie and Ivo Bosnar in the middle, with the never-tiring Petar Markovic's presence out of midfield, will need to be on-song for Ivan Petkovic's side.

On Sunday, Wollongong FC host Manly United at John Crehan Park with both sides playing their way into good form. Wollongong FC has jumped out of the blocks earlier than expected, with the hard-fought win at Macarthur Rams testament to the great fighting spirit amongst John Turner's side. Phil Moss' Manly United has been impressive from day one of the Johnny Warren Cup, and the side seems to be showing no effect of the defeat against Sutherland Sharks in Round 3.

Manly was impressive in dispatching Marconi Stallions before the Easter Break, though will have to be at their best to defeat Wollongong on home soil.

West Sydney Berries will face A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers in the final match of the round. The Berries will be without John Tsironis due to suspension, though will be confident of taking the game to their opponents after the great showing against Sydney United - despite the final loss.

Scott Baillie and Ramsin Shamon have built a solid group in a short period of time, and led by the wise heads of Kosta Lagoudakis and Sash Tirovski, the Berries will be no push-over for the Tigers.

A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt on the other hand will be looking to consolidate their positive moment following the defeat of Blacktown City.

John Romeo finally got to field his best eleven against the Demons after a horrendous run of injuries and suspensions limited the Tigers' boss in the opening rounds – the clash against the Berries will be a good point to measure whether the Tigers will be a side capable of challenging for finals football this season.

## Smart Football, Smarter Footballers

Ashley Ryan belongs to a new breed of footballers who are not just accomplished on the field of play; they are really quite clever off of it. A far cry from the days when heading the old leather orb on a soggy afternoon guaranteed the loss of another few thousand brain cells.

Manly United's Ryan is a few short months away from completing his degree in Human Movements, one of a range of sports science areas now available. "I'd like to work in the strength and conditioning field one day," says the 22-year old "It's something I feel would not only be challenging but rewarding too."

The attacking central midfielder hails from Blacktown, in Sydney, before making the colossal move (sic) to Pennant Hills and has been on the books at Manly for several years.

"Phil Moss is a great coach and knows how to get the best out of his players. He has built a squad of good lads and the results of that are now starting to show," he adds.

A half-whispered reply to the question of where his allegiance lies, Ryan says his idol as a kid was Alan Shearer and that is why he now looks out for Newcastle United results in the English Premier League. Questioning his sanity on this answer and you also find out that Roger Federer and Tiger Woods are the other sporting icons he admires because; "They have reached the top of their chosen professions and that is all you can aspire to."

That said, when his degree studies are over he has the intention of continuing further education with Business Management high on the agenda, at the moment: "Yeah, I'd like to do some sort of business course but that's now. Ask me in 6-months and it could be a different reply," he chuckles.

Ryan also lives by a fantastic philosophy: "In life and in football I want to go as far as I can go, to push myself to be the best I can be. If the opportunity came to play overseas I would like to try it and to travel around but if not I like to think I can be successful outside of the game too."

Not a dour lad, Ryan has a ready wit and dry sense of humour who names Craig Midgely as the joker of the team; "Midge has been there, seen it, done it, has played overseas and certainly knows his stuff and is always ready with a joke. He has the larrikin in him or perhaps he's a larrikin. It's hard to tell the difference around him at times."

So there you have it, a stylish midfielder player and a learned young man with a hunger for knowledge allied to a burning ambition. A lovely lad who has his head screwed on and knows the direction he wants to steer his life and career, and the good news for the ladies is.....he is still single too!

## Schwarzer hails team effort

The air in Kunming might be thin, but Mark Schwarzer was floating on it after reaching into his box of tricks to keep Australia's compass pointed firmly towards the 2010 World Cup as they held China 0-0 at a raucous Tuodong Stadium.

Perpetrator one moment, peerless the next, Schwarzer repeated his penalty-kick heroics of November 2005 against Uruguay to this time deny China in a dramatic finale to another World Cup qualifier Australia could not afford to lose. And thanks to the prince of the penalty stops they didn't as Schwarzer recovered from conceding a spot-kick two minutes from time, to hold his nerve and dive to his left to deny substitute Shao Jiayi in a heart-in-the-mouth moment reminiscent of Telstra Stadium 28 months ago when he made two shoot-out saves against the South Americans.



*Mark Schwarzer is congratulated by team-mates*

It looked like justice delivered with Schwarzer insisting his collision with Bo Qu, a result of a mix-up with Jade North, should never have been punished so severely by referee Omar Al Saeedi.

"I didn't think it should have been given," said the Middlesbrough monolith.

"I'll have another look at it on TV but my first feeling was that it was harsh."

"But, playing away from home in games like this, referees are pretty quick to give these sorts of decisions."

Case in point Germany 2006, when Fabio Grosso's last-minute dive over the legs of Lucas Neill conned the referee and dumped Australia out of the tournament with Schwarzer unable to intervene on that occasion.

Schwarzer added: "I just tried to stay big and revert back to what I normally do at penalties - and it worked."

"I was told before the game that Weifeng Li normally takes them for China and he shoots to the right, but instead Jiayi stepped up. I was just happy to go the

right way, and the ball hit my legs and bounced back into my hands. I haven't had a good run for my club since World Cup qualification, so this is extra sweet.

It's nice to come up with saves in the big games. It would have been a travesty for us to lose because we played so well and looked comfortable for so long - if anything I thought we should have won the game."

Schwarzer was unwilling to hog all the glory for himself after a priceless point which, in the light of a raft of injuries going into the game, was gratefully accepted.

"The team were outstanding today, every player on the pitch performed admirably, especially when you consider the altitude, the travel and having just a day and bit to prepare. It was outstanding."

Brett Holman, who excelled off the bench as an early replacement for the injured Archie Thompson, exemplified the craft, guile and boundless energy of an Australian team forced to play for 78 minutes without a recognised striker. The NEC Nijmegen attacking midfielder was signalled out by coach Pim Verbeek as Australia's perpetual motion man on a day when the understudies - Michael Beauchamp, Jade North and Carl Valeri included - showed they are worthy of leading man roles.

"I just wanted the chance to show what I can do," said Holman after just his 13th cap for his country. "We had so little time to prepare ... it was my plan to show I might be worth a starting position in the games ahead add I was happy with my performance."

Midfielder Jason Culina, who shimmered alongside the pugnacious Vince Grella and hard-grafting Carl Valeri in the midfield workshop, said: "In the circumstances we're happy with a point."

"Schwarzy came to our rescue - he keeps doing it doesn't he? That penalty could have killed us. It was a bit soft but Schwarzy did the business."

"Overall we played nice football, we were patient. We had no recognised striker but if we keep going like this we'll qualify. It's a matter of winning at home and not getting beaten away."

## Neill salutes stand-ins

Exultant skipper Lucas Neill has saluted the stand-ins after they had stood up to help Australia just a little closer to the holy grail of South Africa 2010.

With fellow defenders Michael Beauchamp and Newcastle Jets skipper Jade North excelling alongside Neill and Brett Holman and Carl Valeri in a team ravaged by withdrawals, Neill hailed the spirit and poise of the Socceroos as they passed and probed their way to a point against China in their own high-altitude backyard.

But when you have the right attitude who cares about altitude, with Neill saying: "It was an extremely spirited performance we showed great character in the difficult circumstances."

"Everybody excelled but in particular Jade North was outstanding. He was least experienced out there today and he looked like he'd been playing there for years. We've found another gem, I think."

"Beauchamp was also excellent, as were the likes of Carl Valeri, and of course Vince Grella."

"Really the whole team just delivered. We were superb, we kept the ball for long periods and China were left having to result to long balls. Okay, they caught us out with one late on - but then Schwarzy made sure we weren't punished. Yet again he's come up trumps."

"And on another day we might have nicked two goals."

With China made to look what they are - pedestrian - by an Australian team without six front-line players, Neill added: "We always looked comfortable and we knew they would tire."

"We had great discipline and I think this result makes a statement to the rest of the group that we're going to be hard to beat."

Coach Pim Verbeek declared: "I am proud of my team today. In the light of so many injuries a point is very good."

"Lucas Neill did a great job in teaming up with Michael Beauchamp and Jade North at the back and looking so secure after so little time together."

"But I couldn't signal out one player over another - everybody was excellent."



*Coach Pim Verbeek and skipper Lucas Neill*

"It is the first time I've been in charge of a team without a striker after I had to take Archie Thompson off so early. But Brett Holman did really well in his place. He looked like he could have run for another 90 minutes."

"The players are shattered now, they are dead now but they gave everything and we are in a good position to reach the next stage of qualification now."

"For China (two points from two games), though, it will be hard because you have to win your home games. We have an advantage over them now in the group (Australia play them again at home in their final group match)."

"They surprised me. I thought they would come at us early on - but they never did."

"They let us play - and we have too many good players for anybody to give us that luxury. I think they showed us too much respect. They looked at our team sheet and who we had and thought to themselves they were in for a tough game."

The only blemish on a day to savour for the Dutchman was the loss of Melbourne Victory's Thompson, who never recovered from an early lunging assault from Xiaoling Feng and was left with a knee injury the extent of which has yet to be determined.

"He was devastated and I feel very sorry for him," he added. "It was a tough tackle but I expected even more of them in the game."

It was the first time Verbeek had seen Vince Grella and Michael Beauchamp in the flesh - and he was impressed.

"They were excellent, as was Mark Bresciano who had to go up front all by himself and did a great job also."



# MOSSY'S MUMBLINGS

MUMBLINGS is a column based on true events and real people. While we have eyes and ears everywhere please feel free to email your short story – funny, quirky, sad, stupid, hilarious, down right ridiculous or otherwise – to [mossy@mwfa.com.au](mailto:mossy@mwfa.com.au) While we try to get every story to print the final decision rests with the editor.

**RED CARD:** HE has without a doubt the biggest mouth in the MWFA premier league and has gone through three clubs in as many seasons as a result.

It's no wonder even his newest team-mates are tiring of him as he doesn't have the game to back up his trash-talking ways! He was at it again during the first round of the MWFA Cup at Cromer Park on Easter Monday.



**GOOAAAL:** THE local season kicked off in style on Easter Monday with the first round of the MWFA Cup at Cromer Park. There were goals, good football, upsets and controversy as the home of football came alive for another year.

This Sunday promises to be even better with three competition points on the line as all premier league teams do battle at headquarters again before moving back to their respective grounds next weekend.



CUP competitions always throw up David v Goliath battles and often it is the underdog who comes out smiling.

As was the case on Easter Monday when newly promoted MWFA premier league outfit Manly-Allambie unceremoniously dumped neighbours Manly Vale out of the cup with a 3-0 first round victory. And it could have been more!

But how much of an underdog is the Dave Bonney-coached Manly-Allambie?

Only time will tell but the squad is used to success having been challenging for AL1 honours year after year before finally cracking it for a premiership in 2007.

Established clubs will take the wily Bonney and his charges lightly at their own peril in 2008.



THE Cromer Park canteen sold out of stock on Easter Monday following a bumper crowd for the first round of the MWFA Cup.

And, to prove the relationship between the association and Manly United is as strong as ever, it was representatives of the latter who earned their stripes serving food for most of the day.

Players from the MUFC under-18 boy's side and women's premier league were manning the BBQ and canteen – and were heard mumbling as they left that they "had never worked so hard in their life!"



WHILE on the Easter Monday blockbuster, resident MWFA man-for-all-jobs Donny Gale again stepped up to the plate to ensure nets and corner flags were up on all fields. With regular Cromer Park curator Eric Beckett visiting family in Melbourne over Easter, former whistle-blower Donny deputised to ensure all the fields were suitably "dressed" for the games.



MANLY United received a message of "good luck" from an unexpected source this week when rising Fox Sports news reading starlet Melanie McLaughlin wished the first grade side all the best for 2008. Mel got to know some of the players during her time as a producer on Football Stars of Tomorrow a couple of years ago and has been an admirer ever since.

"I learnt to surf with the Manly United boys during a shoot we did for FSOT at Manly Beach with Layne Beachley and will be forever indebted for those surfing lessons," she said this week.

"I'm always looking for Manly's results in the NSW Premier League and hope to even catch a game or two this season."

Glamour like that is always welcome at Cromer Park!



THIS certainly isn't Manly United striker Craig Midgley's Mumbblings debut and we can almost guarantee it won't be his last appearance either! But the former Halifax (UK) marksman has been at it again – this time down at the AIS in Canberra during the recent AFC A-Licence coaching course.

"Midge" – widely known as the joker in the pack at MUFC - was in the recovery centre after a practical session on the field to ensure he is fresh for his return from injury against Wollongong FC this weekend when he "accidentally" pushed an emergency button.



*"It's that way...MUFC striker Craig Midgley shows the way on the AFC A-Licence"*

The result? A group of very diligent first aid officers came scrambling in to "treat" him before finding out it was a false alarm. Asked to pose for the camera for the A-Licence staff to prove his fitness after the incident, the above photo said it all!



THE enthusiasm of local coaches to educate themselves and provide better coaching for their players knows no bounds with this week's Junior Licence at Cromer Park a complete sell-out.

There are plans in place to run another two Junior Licence courses and at least one more Youth Licence before the end of the year.

Watch [www.mwfa.com.au](http://www.mwfa.com.au) for dates throughout the season.



TWO more former Manly United players made their Socceroo debuts this week when Adam Griffiths and Nikolai Topor-Stanley donned the green and gold against Singapore.

"Griffo" joined his brother Ryan as another ex-Cromer Parker to play for his country and added his name to an international role of honour that includes the likes of Lucas Neill, Ian Gray, Bobby Catlin, Richard Miranda and Jason Polak.



THE annual Vanuatu Boot Drive is nearing its completion with clubs urged to collect as many pairs of football boots as they can to have them shipped to our island neighbours in need of footwear.

Rebel Warringah Mall and Mike Pawleys (Dee Why Square) are collecting the boots and offering great deals on any new pair's bought in exchange. You can also drop off your old pair to your local club before April 12.

For more information, call Brian Dunphy on 0411 222 115.

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<b>COACH</b>	<b>CRAIG MIDGELY</b> MUFC 1 <sup>ST</sup> TEAM PLAYER UEFA B LICENCE
<b>VENUE</b>	CROMER PARK - HOME OF MANLY UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB
<b>DATES</b>	APRIL – 14 <sup>TH</sup> 15 <sup>TH</sup> 17 <sup>TH</sup> 18 <sup>TH</sup>
<b>TIMES</b>	7:30 AM – 9.00 AM
<b>COST</b>	\$100 – INCLUDES FOOTBALL AND PUMP
<b>ELIGIBILITY</b>	MUST BE PLAYING REPRESENTATIVE YOUTH LEAGUE (Boys/Girls aged 11-15)

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**CLOSING DATE FOR BOOKINGS – FRIDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> APRIL – 5PM**

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<b>VENUE</b>	CROMER PARK - HOME OF MANLY UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB
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