

KICK-OFF

THURSDAY 17 JULY 2025

7 PM // VALENTINE SPORTS PARK

FINAL





MATCH PREVIEW

The Sapphire Cup final will see APIA Leichhardt take on Mt Druitt Town Rangers in what promises to be a compelling encounter at Valentine Sports Park.



APIA have experienced a mixed league campaign so far this season, but have excelled in the Cup, breaking past four top tier National Premier Leagues Women's NSW teams to make the Grand Final.

They opened their campaign with a strong 4-1 victory over Sydney Olympic before prevailing in an exhilarating 5-4 win against NWS Spirit, which featured goals from Estelle Fragale, Zoe Panagopoulos, Te Reremoana Walker and a brace from Ashlee Brodigan.

Moving on, APIA Leichhardt picked up another 4-1 win - beating Northern Tigers at Lambert Park to advance to the Semi-Final.

Up against a strong Western Sydney Wanderers side, they fell behind in the 12th minute, but equaliser shortly after via an own goal, before Sophie Hoban secured their spot in the Sapphire Cup final with a late winner.

Mt Druitt, on the other hand, have been mightily impressive since their promotion from League One Women's in 2024, pushing strongly for what would be a sensational NPL Women's NSW Premiership.

In the Sapphire Cup, they began Round Three with a 5-1 win over Caringbah Redbacks FC - the only goal they were to concede in the tournament thus far.

A 1-0 win against Gladesville Ravens was followed by a 2-0 victory over Sydney University SFC, which featured early goals from Leena Khamis and Rosaria Galea.

In the Semi-Final, an 82nd minute goal from substitute Rita Boateng secured their spot in what promises to be a highly entertaining Sapphire Cup final.

The sides have met twice in the league in 2025, with the first match going the way of Mt Druitt in Round Four, with an 86th and 92nd minute goals from Clare Holder and Roukayah Al Fararjeh securing a statement victory.

However, in their most recent fixture, it was APIA who emerged victorious, with Hoban and Ashlee Brodigan securing a Round 17 win for last year's Grand Finalists in the NPL Women's NSW competition.

With both sides showing they have the capacity to get the better of each other at different stages of the season, this promises to be a thrilling, tense encounter.

So make sure to get down to Valentine Sports Park at 7pm on Thursday, the 17th of July, to watch two of the best sides in the state battle it out for the prestigious Sapphire Cup, with the game also available live and free on Football NSW's YouTube Channel.



KEY PLAYERS

Both teams will feature plenty of quality in the final, with big names set to impress all across the park.

Estelle Fragale will be key to the midfield battle for APIA Leichhardt, with the 22-year-old a consistent engine for her side, combining tenacity off the ball with technique and guile in possession.

Te Reremoana Walker's combination with Fragale has been an exciting watch this campaign, and the two will be a formidable force in allowing APIA to play forwards while making them hard to break down.

Further up the field, Ashlie Crofts and Sophie Hoban are both more than capable of finding decisive moments, while 2024 Sapphire Cup final winner Hannah McNulty will also provide exciting quality.

While Claudia Cicco and Jess Seaman will be players leading the charge from the back.

When looking at Mt Druitt, it's hard to go past the name of Leena Khamis, who has excelled once more in New South Wales this campaign.

Khamis is a top competitor, and the former Matildas influence could be the decider at Valentine Sports Park, as she so often is for her side.

Roukayah Al Fararjeh will also be crucial for her side, with the winger a constant threat due to her blistering pace and dribbling ability down either flank.

Meanwhile, in defence, Holly Williams will be a calm, dominant presence for her side, having started every league game this season along with Kaiya Buchannan, while Renee Krastanovska is always capable of a spectacular save in goals.

You can also throw in Keiko Tanaka in the mix with her experience along with Rita Boateng up front and Ena Harada.

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McNULTY HAS EYES ON THE SAPPHIRE CUP PRIZE

Ahead of what promises to be a thrilling Sapphire Cup final, we spoke to APIA Leichhardt star Hannah McNulty on the match.

APIA worked their way through a tough draw to make the Grand Final, which featured a strong 2-1 Semi-final victory over the Western Sydney Wanderers.

"It's a great feeling to qualify," said McNulty.

"We've had a few ups and downs this season, but recently I feel like we've come into some really good form - I think that's reflected by reaching the Grand Final.

"It means a lot to the club, and we've got all eyes on taking home the trophy."

The famous Italian Club will be taking on Mt Druitt Town Rangers in the big dance, with APIA recently prevailing 2-0 against their opponents in the league.

"They're definitely a strong side, there's no doubt about that," McNulty said when asked about Mt Druitt as opponents.

"I think that's clear with where they are in the league.

"They've got a few really experienced players that lead the side well, and we're not going to take it lightly.

"I think our performance against them in the league has given us extra confidence and we are determined to get things done on the day."

McNulty has strong experience in the Sapphire Cup Final, after playing a phenomenal role in Northern Tigers' success last season, giving her good stead to go again in 2025.

"That would be an awesome personal achievement," said McNulty when asked about winning back-to-back Sapphire Cups.

"After winning it last year, I definitely have a taste of what it's like to be Sapphire Cup Champions, so I've definitely got a little bit more fire in my belly.

"That would be a really exciting achievement for sure."

Meanwhile, after a Grand Final loss last season, APIA are set on securing silverware this campaign, and the Sapphire Cup is their best opportunity so far this season.

"The club is full of great people, and I think that gives us an edge," said McNulty.

"Everyone has such a desire to win, everyone has eyes on the trophy and that's giving us an extra push.

"This season's been pretty rocky, we started well, but I think we're coming into some really good form at the pointy end of the campaign, and we're really looking to finish on a high."

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ROUKAYAH AL FARARJEH

Ahead of the Sapphire Cup final, we spoke to Mt Druitt Town Rangers star Roukayah Al Fararjeh on the big match.

Mt Druitt qualified for the Sapphire Cup final with a 1-0 win over Macarthur Rams, which marked a milestone achievement in what has been a fantastic campaign so far.

"For Mt Druitt, qualifying for the final for the first time is an extraordinary achievement that gives a sense of pride and excitement," she said.

"This milestone signifies not only the culmination of hard work and dedication from the players and coaching staff but also represents the growth and development of the club as a whole.

"The teams atmosphere is constantly filled with anticipation and joy, as the team embraces the opportunity to showcase their skills on a larger stage.

"The journey to the finals serves as a testament to their resilience and determination, igniting aspirations for future successes and laying the foundation for a promising career in the league."

After coming up from the League One Women's competition last season, Mt Druitt's aim was simply survival in 2025, but they've excelled all expectations, currently

pushing strongly for the NPL Women's Premiership.

"Reflecting on the campaign thus far, I believe it has been a remarkable journey filled with both challenges and successes," said Al Fararjeh.

"The team's collective effort and determination have been evident in every match, showcasing our growth and resilience.

"Each game has provided valuable lessons, allowing us to refine our strategies and strengthen our tactics.

"The support from each other and the community has been motivating us to push our limits.

"Overall, I am proud of what we have accomplished and I'm optimistic about our potential as we move forward, striving for even greater achievements in the remaining matches in the competition."

When asked about what winning the Sapphire Cup would mean, Al Fararjeh gave a thoughtful, compelling answer, outlining her intentions ahead of the Grand Final against APIA Leichhardt.

"Winning the Sapphire Cup would be a monumental achievement for both me and my club, symbolising not just a trophy, but countless training sessions of hard work and dedication," she said.

"Winning the Sapphire Cup for the club would elevate our status, inspiring players and coaches that there is no limit on what you can achieve.

"Given that this is Mt Druitt's first year in NPL1, I believe it would make a historic accomplishment for the club and future generations of players to come.

"The victory would bring passion within our club's community, drawing us closer together, celebrating our shared journey and setting the stage for even greater aspirations ahead."

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ATTARD FOCUSED ON SAPPHIRE CUP FINAL SUCCESS

Ahead of what promises to be an exhilarating Sapphire Cup final, we spoke to APIA Leichhardt head coach Brad Attard to preview the game.

Attard's APIA qualified for the final with a 2-1 win over Western Sydney Wanderers, with a late goal from Sophie Hoban securing a historic victory for the famous Italian club.

"Naturally, it feels great to qualify for a final," Attard said.

"APIA's a big club and we want silverware and the only place to get silverware is to make a final.

"So we're happy to be there."

APIA have experienced a mixed campaign so far as the proud club continues to put in the work in playing finals football this year.

While earning periods of good form, they have struggled for consistency in terms of results, but still have it all to play for as we enter the business end of the season.

"It's been a bit of a turbulent campaign," said Attard.

"We've had some great patches, at the start of the year to win the first three games, we went through a bit of a drought and then had eight matches unbeaten in all competitions which was really good and got the cogs in motion.

"But unfortunately, we just haven't taken enough points.

"The finals in the competition are still the main focus and we're looking to make a finals run late this year."

But APIA have demonstrated their quality in big games throughout the season, namely against Sapphire Cup finalists Mt Druitt Town Rangers, where Attard's side earned a comprehensive 2-0 victory in Round 17.

"The reality is they beat us 2-0 at the start of the year, we beat them 2-0 recently," Attard said when asked if the recent win would give them confidence in the final.

"But all form goes away in a Cup final.

"It's the best team for 90 minutes, over 120 or in penalties that prevails.

"We'll need to be at our best to beat them.

"They're a great side with plenty of experience but we've also got experience in a final - unfortunately losing a final - but we'll be looking to capture the moments of the Sapphire Cup final and bring home a trophy."

Meanwhile, with APIA facing a tough road to the final, Attard believes a win over the league leaders would be the icing on the cake of a successful tournament.

"It's a great feeling to win any trophy," he said.

"We've beaten four NPL clubs to make the final - out of every single draw we've had an NPL club, so it's been a tough road into the final, and to win it against a quality side would be a great experience for the players."

Should APIA prevail it will be the second time the Inner West side has tasted Sapphire Cup success after taking it out in 2023 in their victory over the Northern Tigers.

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GOUGH BELIEVES IN RANGERS ENERGY AS SAPPHIRE CUP FINAL APPROACHES

With the Sapphire Cup final fast approaching, we spoke to Mt Druitt Town Rangers head coach Ben Gough on the match and the season so far.

Mt Druitt qualified for the Sapphire Cup final with a 1-0 win over Macarthur Rams, which marked a milestone achievement in what has been a fantastic campaign so far.

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TEAM LISTS

- 1 Sophie MAGUS
- 2 Claudia CICCO
- 3 Tash PRIOR
- 4 Jess SEAMAN
- 5 Teal KILBRIDE
- 6 Mona WALKER
- 7 Charlotte LANCASTER
- 8 Hannah McNULTY
- 10 Melissa CACERES
- 11 Ashlie CROFTS
- 13 Jordan JASNOS
- 14 Mia GOLDING
- 15 Gisella PIPINO
- 16 Estelle FRAGALE
- 18 Sophie HOBAN
- 19 Imogen LANE
- 20 Zoe PANAGOPOULOS
- 24 Christina KICEEC
- 30 Paige CUTHILL
- 38 Alyssa ROSE
- 39 Ashlee BRODIGAN
- 40 Sally JAMES



COACH: Brad ATTARD
ASSISTANT COACH: Kevin BUSH
VIDEO ANALYST: Robert D'ARRIGO
GK COACH: Joshua DA PALMA
KIT MAN: Brett LANE
MANAGER: Annette FOLEY

- 1 Laura TREDINNICK
- 2 Holly WILLIAMS
- 3 Kaiya BUCHANAN
- 6 Holly PENDER
- 7 Sheiden JABOUR
- 8 Natalie CASHA
- 10 Clare HOLDER
- 12 Tiana BARTON
- 14 Holly DALRYMPLE
- 15 Rosie GALEA
- 17 Olivia SLOAN
- 19 Leena KHAMIS
- 23 Tiarne FLAVIN
- 24 Jessica ROBINSON
- 25 Rita BOATENG
- 27 Tasmyn HILL
- 28 Keiko TANAKA
- 30 Roukayah AL FARARJEH
- 31 Ella BUCHANAN
- 32 Ena HARADA
- 36 Wenny GAO
- 38 Adelaide WYRZYNSKI
- 46 Charlotte JONSSON
- 88 Renee KRSTONOVSKA
- Jakeelie HOOK
- Isabella PRESTON
- Selina MISFUD
- Sara El - HELOU
- Ivy ROSE-BIAG



COACH: Ben Gough
MANAGER: Joyce Williams
ASSISTANT COACH: Matt Donald

REFEREE: Harriet Gee
ASSISTANT REFEREES: Lara Hogan & Hannah Sheridan
FOURTH OFFICIAL: Casey Flemming

*Team listings subject to change

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