

Ebbsfleet Vs. Dartford U18's – 1-2

Date: 1st Feb 2009, Venue: Fleet Leisure, Weather: Cold, windy then snowy!!!

Dartford Team: Adam Molloy, Jack Walter, Lewis Sutherland, Ashley Issuree, Tom Eyers, Sean Heather ©, Danny Nash, Danny Crouch, James Jordan, Callum Nye, Luke White. Subs: Frazer Bent, Connor Heffernan, Billy Eves.

It's always going to be a tough game when the two favourites for the title go head to head. On one side you had the league leaders, Dartford, currently 7 points clear, and on the other side you had Ebbsfleet, 9 points behind Dartford but, prior to kick off, enough games in hand to go level on points with the league leaders. Sandwiched in between the two sides is Corinthian with one game in hand on the leaders, albeit with a 7 point deficit.

The conditions today were not conducive to a nice, technical game of football played on the deck. The visitors were kicking down hill in the first half but such was the fierce wind, the advantage still sat with the side kicking with the wind. Dartford started slowly and were perhaps fortunate to stay on level terms when a shot cannoned back off the bar and, to be fair, this wasn't the last time that either the wood-work or the impressive visiting goalie, Adam Molloy, came to the rescue.

Slowly but surely Dartford forced their way in to the game and were unlucky not to take the lead when an effort from Callum Nye narrowly whistled over the bar. The Darts chances were few and far between but with conditions against them, the visitors' solid back 4 and keeper repelled all that was thrown at them.

H/T Score 0-0. One change was made at half time with Connor Heffernan replacing Danny Nash, who had yesterday helped send his school side through to the county final – well-done Dan. The only instruction was to give better service to our two forwards to enable them to keep the ball better in our attacking third. We also urged the players to take advantage of the conditions.

The players left the changing rooms for the second half in to blizzard conditions. For the second consecutive week Dartford caught the opposition napping at the re-start. Before the home bench had taken their place, the visitors were a goal up. Danny Crouch found the ball at his feet in a crowded box and his curled shot beat the keeper all ends up. This was an instrumental point in the game and the manner in which the rest of the game was to be played out. Immediately after the goal, we had Ebbsfleet players complaining to the ref about the conditions and claiming all manner of excuses as to why the game should be abandoned. To his credit, the ref played his own game and rebuffed all of the whining. Dartford were well on top now and dictating the game.

10 Minutes in to the second half, the spirit of the game took a turn for the worse. I have been involved in football for many years and what happened today brought back memories of the last time we were playing Ebbsfleet away, and co-incidentally in control of the game. Last year we were reduced to 10 men, when the home keeper decided to kick, pull and insult one of our players. Our player was shown a red card for getting involved. The ref saw the latter half of the incident and dealt with the player accordingly. They say "lightning doesn't strike twice", well it does in Northfleet! The Ebbsfleet number 5 provoked our number 10 in to going chest to chest. The Ebbsfleet player then stuck his face in to that of the Dartford player and promptly went down like he was shot! As with last years incident, the other Ebbsfleet players couldn't help the ref enough when it came to letting him know what should

happen and who should be sent off. The Dartford 10 was dismissed from the field of play and the Ebbsfleet player was soon feeling a lot better. This was shocking play-acting and while I do not, and could never, condone violence; the Dartford number 10 never touched the opposing player.

During this break of play resulting from the work of the still at large sniper, the Dartford players were assembled to calm them down and urged to keep their focus. This was helped immensely when James Jordan out paced the home defence, maybe the Ebbsfleet number 5 was still feeling dizzy from the non-incident, and slotted the ball across the keeper and in to the net to put the visitors 2 goals up. We continued to defend well but soon had a reshuffle to make when Frazer Bent replaced Luke White and then a nasty challenge saw Connor Heffernan replaced by Billy Eves. Dartford conceded a soft goal with 10 minutes to go when the ball was deflected past Adam Molloy to give the home side false hope.

Dartford remained strong to the end of the game for a well deserved 2 – 1 win. The celebrations at the end were a joy to watch. This was not only for the well fought and merited win and the resulting breathing space, but also for the triumph of football over such cynical tactics.

Goal Scorers: Danny Crouch and James Jordan.

Men of the match: Adam Molloy for his great display of solid keeping & James Jordan for his winning goal.



Adam Molloy

James Jordan



The blizzard in Northfleet!!!