

Sunday 1st March 2009
Dartford FC 2 Corinthian 1

In my two years of managing the under 18s at Dartford, we have played 3 and lost 3 against Corinthian, all by the odd goal and with 2 games settled by a penalty. With Corinthian not playing at a senior level, this was our last chance to get a win over them. I have to say that we have deserved something out of our games with them but we have always taken defeat with grace and dignity.

The game understandably drew a fair amount of interest and a sizeable crowd. After all, this was 1st against 2nd and a 3 – 0 win for Corinthian would have knocked us off of top spot, albeit leaving us with a game in hand.

The start Dartford made to the game suggested that the players were up for the match. There are a lot of close friends amongst the two squads but for 90 minutes, friendship went out of the window! Dartford pushed on from their encouraging start and took the lead in the 20th minute. Sean Heather (who never ever scores!) found himself in the D with the ball at his feet. He curled the ball in to the top corner and I don't know who was most surprised, him or me! This was a great goal from a player who has performed heroics this season, but normally with his defensive work rather than his goals.

10 minutes later, a long diagonal ball from right-back Jack Walter, found Frazer Bent around the penalty spot. His looping header dropped over the keepers head to put the young Darts 2 goals to the good. Frazer isn't the biggest of players but he is scoring more and more regularly with his head, and his left foot, oh, and his right foot too!

Corinthian then began to turn the screw. Their threat was all from their wide players, numbers 7 & 10. It was the number 10 that earned a free kick close to the bye line. The home defenders won the first header but the ball fell to number 7 who squeezed the ball home from 12 yards. The visitors had other threats, but so did the home side but it was the home side that looked the stronger of the two teams. Despite the friendships, plenty of crunching tackles were made but the spirit of the game remained good.

H/T Score 2-1: At half time, we spoke about tightening up on their wide players. I appreciated that this may have left us a little exposed in the centre but the threat was always going to come from the wide positions.

The second half flew by. The threat from their 7 & 10 was negated by closer attention being paid to them, and the home threat was coming from the late arriving Danny Crouch. Crouchy was unlucky not to score when he was sandwiched in the box. He appeared to be hauled back but this was the least of his worries once the goalie had clattered him! Dan received a nasty gash but nothing worse. This was a great example of the spirit the game was played in – both players were up and shaking hands.

Changes were made to freshen up our front line. Marco Duarte & James Jordan replaced Callum Nye and Frazer Bent. Marco came close to scoring through a half-chance that went wide and JJ was unlucky when his shot flew narrowly wide of post and cross-bar. One pleasing point to the game was when Charlie Crudden finally made his competitive debut for Dartford. Charlie picked up a nasty injury during the very final training session before the season kicked off. It's good to have another option on the left.

The game finished 2-1 to Dartford, a score line that most people agreed the home side deserved. It was fantastic to go 6 points clear of Corinthian with a game in hand. We are now half way through our season but we are taking nothing for granted. All teams are bound to drop points between now and the end of the season but we have given ourselves some tough targets this year and so far we are meeting them. We look forward to the latter half of the season with enthusiasm and excitement.

Team:- Molloy, Walter, Sutherland, Issuree, Eves, Heather ©, Nash, Crouch ■ Bent, Nye, White ■
Subs:- Jordan, Duarte, Evers, Crudden,
Goals:- Heather, Bent



MOTM:- Captain Sean Heather

Pos	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1	Dartford	12	11	0	1	37	11	26	33
2	Corinthian	13	8	3	2	34	16	18	27
3	Welling Utd	14	8	0	6	32	27	5	24
4	Bearsted	14	7	1	6	32	26	6	22

Kent Youth League – league table as of 1st March