

Friendly:- Monday 8th September
Dartford FC 2 Erith Town 0
Princes Park Community Pitch

Squad:- Molloy, Fairman, Crudden, King, Ayoola, Heather ©, Nash, Issuree, Nye, Dent, Heffernan
Subs:- Crouch, Eves, Bent, Evers
Goals:- Bent, Heffernan

Due to the postponement of their 1st league fixture, the U18's were looking to get back on track with a convincing performance against Erith Town in a hastily arranged friendly.

Erith Town were last years league champions, and although there were a lot of new faces and a change of manager, the game promised to be a stern test.

Dartford went in to the game knowing that having put 13 goals past their opponents in the preceding two games whilst not having conceded a single goal pointed to a lot of complacency in their 5 – 0 drubbing by Brentwood Town. Brentwood were a very good side and whilst many players were missing for the game, the score line was a much needed short sharp shock and a very well timed lesson for Dartford. We conceded 3 goals from set pieces and went missing in open play for the other 2! I am sure that this was only a blip and hopefully the players will heed the need for a high tempo, high work rate ethic game in game out.

Now on to the Erith game.....This game saw the return to action of Karl Dent and Danny Crouch who had both been missing for the previous match. They are both promising players who, on their day, can have a big say on the outcome of a match. These two added to Danny Nash, captain Sean Heather, Ashley Issuree and Connor Heffernan made up a midfield 5 that offers much in terms of grit and ability in equal measure.

The defence for this game pretty much picked itself with Rob King and Ola Ayoola playing as centre backs between left back Charlie Crudden and right back Brett Fairman. The lone striker in the first half was Callum Nye.

Dartford got on top in the game very early on with many chances being created but wasted. Having said that, the visiting keeper played superbly and kept his side in the game. The most noticeable difference between the 2 sides was the tempo to the play and ultimately the fitness that allowed the home side to meet the tempo and ultimately increase it as the game dictated.

The 1st half was over in a flash and Dartford could count themselves unlucky not to have the game sewn up already. Their passing and movement was to be applauded and quite clearly the players wanted to atone for the previous weeks' friendly result.

Half-time score 0-0

The second half saw the planned replacement of Callum Nye by Frazer Bent. This was to allow Callum to be fresh for the following nights reserve fixture away to Lordswood. Tom Evers and Billy Eves replaced the injured Rob King and the impressive Ola Ayoola as centre backs.

Dartford again started well and upped their game a notch which seemed to show a difference in fitness levels between the two sides. This eventually told when Frazer latched on to a ball on the edge of the box and took on, and beat, the more physical Erith Town centre backs. Frazer turned this way and that and seemed intent on taking on all comers before rounding the keeper and putting the ball in the net. I was immensely pleased for Frazer as he had really dug in since his introduction and matched the physical defenders stride for stride. His skill created the opportunity for himself and his strength ensured that no one was going to get the ball off of him. I am sure that many, many more goals will follow.

After an hour, Danny Crouch replaced Karl Dent in the centre of midfield. This was also planned as Karl was to go on and make his debut for the reserve side the following evening. Danny had missed out on any action for the previous couple of weeks as he had strained a ham-string playing for the reserves.

Hand on heart, the introduction of Crouchy really stretched and tested an already tired Erith Town defence. If ever there was a player made to run opponents in to the ground, it's Crouchy! Not long after having come on, Crouchy was pushed a little wide by a pass from inside to out by Connor Heffernan. Crouchy competed for the ball and managed to whip in a cross from the right hand side. The ball was met on the volley by Connor Heffernan who skillfully directed the ball across the keeper with the inside of his left foot. This was no more than Con deserved for his much improved work rate. The desire to reach the cross was there for all to see and the finish showed that despite the late stage of the game, the technique and mental awareness was there for the excellent finish.

Despite further chances, the game finished at 2 – 0 to the young Darts. This was slightly flattering to our opponents but I think that they only fell short in their attacking final third. They were hard to breakdown and they have more than their fair share of physical players – that's not to say that they broke the rules, they were physical in terms of strength and pace but the extra year that Dartford can count on this season told in the end.

MOTM: Too many to mention but special mention has to go to Sean Heather, Connor Heffernan and Charlie Crudden.

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May I take this opportunity to wish a speedy recovery to Left Back Charlie Crudden. During training on Thursday Charlie suffered a dislocated right knee cap. Charlie received excellent treatment from both the clubs medical staff and the emergency services and the early prognosis is that Charlie will be missing from the team for about six weeks. **Next Match:- Sunday 21st September away to Tonbridge Angels.**