

Thursday 18th December – John Ullman Memorial Cup – Round 3 Saltdean Utd 0 Dartford 5

When we saw this draw we had no idea who Saltdean Utd were. They play in the Sussex County Youth League and were invited into this cup as they won their County Cup last season. With a convoy of cars heading down to the Sussex coast, the weather and traffic were on our side. We arrived at Saltdean Utd and were made welcome as soon as we got there with the Chairman serving the drinks in the bar! The pitch was a good size but due to the sticky pitch we feared we may have a battle on our hands to play our normal style of football, but to be fair the pitch wasn't that bad.

We played our usual formation and as you would expect both sides were a little tentative as obviously we didn't know the first thing about each other!! Saltdean had a fair share of possession without really threatening whilst Dartford squandered possession by pumping the ball high and long which just played into the home sides hands. The breakthrough came on 20 minutes when Danny Crouch rifled home a shot from about 15 yards. We hadn't really got going even at this late stage but we kept plugging away and a great cross from Danny Nash was flicked home by Frazer Bent to put the young Darts 2 nil up. That's how the score stayed at half-time. I said to the players at half time that we had to persevere in trying to play football and that we should use the wide areas more. We also spoke about getting tighter to our men and to retain possession of the ball. The second half started in a much more positive manner for Dartford with chances being created on a more regular basis. On 60 minutes Ben Wilson, Joe Foster & Jack Walter replaced Callum Nye, Frazer Bent & Tom Eyers and the fresher legs on a difficult pitch seemed to lift the performance further.

A flowing move found Danny Nash on the right hand side and his ball into the box was finished first time by Karl Dent to make the score 3 nil. Danny Crouch then finished from close range when a corner wasn't cleared. Dartford were well on top by now and Crouchy completed his hat-trick late in the game. This was a particularly pleasing second half performance. What made it so rewarding was the fact that two U16 players played their full part with their excellent performances. Ben Wilson showed just what a cultured player he is by stroking the ball about at the back and Joe Foster did not put a foot wrong in the centre of midfield. He tackled, he passed, he ran with the ball and both players slotted in as though they'd been playing in this squad forever. It was also good to see Jack Walter playing in an attacking role. He held the ball up well and made things happen which is what Jack's game is all about.

Saltdean are excellent hosts and their players are a credit to the club. They were welcoming from the outset and it was great to be able to forge a new relationship with a club out of the area.

Team: Molloy, Issuree, Eves, Sutherland, Eyers, Crouch ©, Heffernan, Nash, Dent, Bent, Nye

Subs:- Walter, Wilson, Foster

Goals:- Crouch (3), Bent, Dent



MOTM:- Danny Crouch – Hard working hat-trick hero!

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