

Sunday 19th April – Kent Youth League Central Division Sevenoaks 2 Dartford 4

Sevenoaks is always a nice place to go and play football. They provide great facilities and you're always made to feel welcome. We were looking forward to this game to try something a little bit different, so that we could rest a player or two with one eye on next Sunday's final. Joe Foster once again, stepped up from the U16s to replace Callum Nye who was serving a one game ban. We had several lads carrying knocks, but we had no choice other than to play them, due to a lack of numbers. We're still going strong in the league – but then again so is everyone else at the top!!

We started with 3 at the back and 2 of those were full-backs. This showed a little bit when we were struggling to keep possession in our defending 3rd. This is something we have done well all season but with a 3, you don't cover the width of the pitch so the defenders have less time to start their passing moves. Having said this, we weathered the early Sevenoaks storm and took the lead after 15 mins. A defender played the ball back to his keeper, the ball was bouncing and Frazer nipped in to put it over the keeper from 12 yards. We then conceded a goal after what appeared to be a clear push on our one central defender and Adam had no chance in goal.

At half-time, it was obvious things had to change. Square pegs in round holes just wasn't working. Billy Eves came on to replace Marco Duarte and we reverted to 4-4-2. Deren also joined the game at half-time. I said to the players during the break that the effort levels just weren't good enough and people were coasting through the game and I reminded them that despite knowing my team for next week, I can always change that. I haven't lost my cool with the players all season but it frustrates me when the quality of these players is being wasted by complacency.

The 2nd half was an entirely different affair. We were up and at them from the off when Frazer added his 2nd to put us 2-1 up and then in the space of 10 minutes we could've had 4 or 5. On a rare Sevenoaks attack, they got in far too easy on our right hand side and a good bit of movement saw Deren left helpless when he was beaten from close range. This was only a temporary set back and Crouchy put us 3-2 up when he fired home from 20 yards. We were well on top now and while many teams would have let their heads drop by being pegged back twice, the spirit of the side showed and we added a fourth when Frazer completed his hat-trick.

Frazer was then rested and replaced by Joe Foster. This allowed me to push Crouchy up and we were creating chances at will. Some of our play on the break particularly from the excellent distribution of Deren, saw us play some quick and purposeful counter attacking football. Further chances came and went but the score finished 4-2 to Dartford.

Frazer was excellent in this game and has been a real threat in the box all season long. He is now our top league goal scorer and that takes some doing with Danny Crouch in the team!! We played much better in the 2nd half and the football was of a much higher quality. A big thank you goes to Joe for stepping in to help again and an even bigger thanks goes to Deren for sharing the gloves with Adam for the last few games. Deren has done brilliantly this season for the club and it's great to see such a nice lad, rising up the ranks. He's one of the nicest lads you'll ever meet and his attitude is 1st class regardless of who he is playing for.

Next week is the big one. As a squad we are determined to enjoy the day and put on a performance capable of competing for the cup. It's been a pleasure to coach these lads all season and I'm sure their ability will shine through on their big day – Good luck lads 'you can do it'!!!

Team:- Molloy (Ibrahim 46), Walter, Issuree, Sutherland, White, Burman, Nash, Crouch, Jordan, Bent (Foster 65), Duarte (Eves 46)

Subs:- Eves, Foster, Ibrahim

MOTM:- Frazer Bent – Hatrick 'hero'

