

KCFA U18s Cup Final – 26th April 2009

Ashford 1 Dartford 2

After what seemed like an age to wait, our big day finally arrived when we could try and bring some silverware back to Princes Park. The game was held at Faversham Town FC and the conditions, the facilities were first class. We all met at Princes Park and travelled down by coach with family and fans alike and from the outset, we were determined to enjoy our day. The plan was to stick to our 4-4-2 and suss out the opposition before we made any amendments to our formation or line up. The players seemed very relaxed and appeared to be focussed on the task in hand.

The game was fairly even contest in the early stages, but it was Dartford that had the first meaningful attempt. Ashford had plenty of possession, but we defended well enough to repel any advances. It's a very large pitch at Faversham and the surface was in good condition and we used this to our advantage by being able to run with the ball and play our usual passing game. After 20 minutes, JJ cut in from the right hand side rode a challenge and fired home from 8 yards. This gave everyone a lift, particularly JJ who was running the Ashford defence ragged. One dangerous run on the left-hand side resulted in Frazer, narrowly missing out on JJ's low, driven cross. We mixed our play up as well and had some long distance efforts, which were dealt with well by the opposing keeper. The half ended 0-1 and we were good value for our lead. The only concern from the coaching staff was that we maybe would go and chase the 2nd goal which would maybe spoil our shape a little bit. The boys were sent back out with the instruction to keep playing, keep working and keep enjoying.

3 minutes into the 2nd half, the game was turned on its head, when our No.2 Jack Walter was red carded for an alleged headbutt. Jack had made a challenge, which video evidence to be shown as fair and a 3rd player took it upon themselves to become involved. As soon as this 3rd player got within distance of Jack, he feigned the headbutt and fell to his knees holding his face. Several opposing players and ultimately the player feigning injury, apologised for the players actions, but this was too late for Jack. Within 5 minutes, Ashford were level. A powerful shot was well parried by Adam but it fell kindly to an Ashford player to pull them level. Having lost Jack, we had no choice but to go to a 4-4-1 and 10 minutes after conceding, that one up front was enough! Danny Crouch picked the ball up in the centre circle and after making some ground, he fed the ball into Callum Nye on the left-hand side, Callum's left-footed cross was volleyed home by JJ to re-establish Dartford's lead. We then had to endure a great deal of Ashford pressure but as this was all long ball, we dealt with it comfortably albeit Adam Molloy making some excellent saves. One in particular when he was quick off of his line denied a certain goal but this was only one of many tremendous saves. We left our 1 up front and decided to let Ashford have the ball in their own half before closing them down. They didn't change their shape and kept the back 4 and they seemed happy to play the ball round in front of us and we were more than happy for them to play in front of us. The game finished 1-2 and I feel that we were good value for our win after having played the better football, be more adventurous and taken our numerical disadvantage in our stride. The celebration at the end is something that will live with me for a very long time. This was a big day and all of our players, put in big performances. We now return to league action on Thursday night (30th April), when we entertain our nearest title rivals, Ebbsfleet Utd.

Team:- Molloy, Walter, Sutherland, Issuree, Eves, Burman, Nash, Crouch ©, Jordan, Bent (Eyers 80), Nye

Subs:- White, Duarte, Evers, Ibrahim

Goals:- James Jordan (2)

MOTM:- Adam Molloy & James Jordan (JJ)

