



Amateur Football Combination

National Respect Gold Award League 2012

Spirit of Football



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@AmateurFC

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Southern Amateur League 3 - 2 Amateur Football Combination

Argonaut Trophy - Wednesday 14 November 2018, Uxbridge FC

The first game for the AFC under the newly appointed management team of Luke Graham and Alistair McCombe was an away trip to the SAL in the Argonaut Trophy at Uxbridge FC.

A new look squad saw debuts handed to no fewer than 7 players in what is always a challenging fixture against Bob Leed's well oiled, SAL team who had run out 5-1 winners in the same fixture last year.

With former AFA and AFC player Jack Costello putting the team through a rigorous warm up in his new role as AFC Coach, it was the AFC who started brightly with debutants James Parker in central midfield looking calm and composed and Liam Hawkins getting on the ball on the left and causing some early issues.

However, the SAL soon found their stride and took an early lead after AFC had a momentary lapse of concentration. A quick throw in was nicely worked and, before the back four had time to react, the ball was in the back of the net, with keeper Henry Warne left with no chance. 1-0 to the SAL.

The early goal seemed to galvanise AFC who began to get a foothold in the game. George Proctor, playing in a deeper midfield role, and Ryan Bright started to get on the ball and pull some strings - finding Josh Higgins in space on the right to deliver a number of testing crosses for the SAL centre halves to repel.

Finally the pressure told when Tom Coulter pressed high and got his reward by stealing the ball from the SAL centre back. Finding himself through on goal he had the deftness of touch and composure to lift the ball over the SAL keeper from 25 yards out and into the goal to make it 1-1.

Halftime. 1-1.

Following a crunching tackle in the closing stages of the first half, new captain and 2017/18 AFC Player of the Year, Ryan Bright, had to come off injured which saw Senior 1 top scorer Reece Crisp come on in his place.

The second half kicked off and both sides continued pressing and probing at breakneck pace, with some lovely football being played. Despite some silky passing from both teams it was a long ball which was to hand the SAL the lead when right back Billy Harris found himself in trouble from a diagonal ball - his outstretched leg doing enough to fell the on-running forward to give the SAL a penalty which Peter Eguae converted coolly to make it 2-1.

The third goal came courtesy of another long ball just a few minutes later. This time a little hesitation between centre backs Aidan Chapman and Jack Byerley, both of whom had been marshalling the back four superbly, allowed the SAL forward to sneak in and slot home.

At 3-1 a lesser side might have rolled over and allowed the game to get out of reach. However, the spirit within the new look AFC team was as evident as it was impressive as they continued to play and press forward. Liam Hawkins was driving at the defence and causing a number of problems on the left and Tom Coulter, Reece Crisp and Josh Higgins all created some half chances. However, it was a driving run from George Proctor in central midfield that got the AFC back in the game. A nice one-two was played and Proctor found himself on the edge of the box, unleashing a powerful drive into the bottom left corner and giving AFC 25 minutes to find an equaliser.

From here it was all AFC. Liam Hawkins went close with a near post drive and was cruelly booked for diving after being brought down by the SAL keeper with 10 minutes to go. Despite the team's best effort the SAL held on until the final whistle to run out 3-2 winners in a very evenly fought contest that could have gone either way. For the AFC it was a case of what could have been but there could be nodoubting the positives from the performance and a great platform to build from moving forwards.

Squad: Warne, Harris (Fleming), Cain, Chapman, Byerley, Proctor, Parker, Bright (capt.) (Crisp), Hawkins, Higgins, Coulter
Goals: Coulter, Proctor MOM: Hawkins

Playing in the Spirit of Football, Promoting Fair Play and Respect for All

