AFA MINOR CUP FINAL

Shene Old Grammarians 3rd XI 4 Norseman 3rd XI 2 (a.e.t.)

played at Riverside Lands, Chiswick on 14th March 2020

Shene Old Grammarians 3rds claimed the AFA Minor Cup with 2 late extra time goals at the end of an entertaining, hard fought game played in good conditions at Old Meadonians ground.

Shene, from AFC Division 3 South took an early lead when Russell Sims, who was dangerous all game, latched on to a loose ball and lobbed the keeper from over 25 metres out. Their opponents from SAL Junior Division 2 North then worked their way back from this early setback to have the better of the next half hour although neither side created many opportunities until the lively Norseman winger Jordan Helan rapped the post on 35 minutes after some sharp play. 5 minutes later it was Shene’s turn to hit the post when Sims shot from 20 yards.

The second half followed the first with Norseman having more of the possession but finding it difficult to crack the resolute Shene defence and Shene on occasions looking dangerous on the break. Norseman however got their equaliser on 70 minutes when a Cem Ertol free kick from 30 yards beat everybody to go straight in to the net. Both sides then pressed unsuccessfully for a winner with the best chance falling to Helan who just missed with a couple of minutes remaining.

The match preceded into extra time without the pace or intensity dropping. Shene then took the lead on 97 minutes when Jack Gifford knocked in from close range after the goalkeeper failed to hold a Louis Holland freekick. But back came Norseman 5 minutes later when midfielder Taron Hawkins, the most stylish player on the pitch, drove home the equaliser with a crisp shot from the edge of the box.

Shene then hit the woodwork three times at the start of the final 15 minutes including Joe Willock striking both uprights with his effort. It looked like their luck might be out but with five minutes left Louis Holland made it 3-2 with a drive that went in with the help of 2 deflections. Norseman threw everybody forward in search of the equaliser but conceded a fourth goal in the final minute when Willock ran 60 yards to outpace everybody and knock the ball into an empty net.

Referee Josh Evans, ably supported by assistants David Behling and Ollie Bierman, kept good control of a competitive match which required a number of cautions but was played throughout in acceptable spirit.

Mike Sainsbury