

SLOUGH TOWN 2 DARTFORD 2 [5-6 ON PENALTIES]

Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong and Moussa Bakayoko both scored, as Dartford came from behind to clinch a draw at Arbour Park. The Darts then sent Slough Town crashing out of the Buildbase FA Trophy 2nd Round in a thrilling penalty shootout.

Thrilling certainly isn't an appropriate word used to describe the first forty-five of this game, however. In fact, scrappy is more suitable, as both sides failed to gain any firm grip on proceedings. That being said, though, the Darts looked the more comfortable when in possession of the ball, as they passed it around calmly and confidently. Unfortunately, the more they probed for an opening, the more the attack came up against a stubborn Rebel defence.

The first real opportunity for Steve King's side didn't materialise until the 22nd minute, and it was the tireless midfielder, Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong, who attempted it himself. Unfortunately, his central shot was saved by goalkeeper Jack Turner. There would be another effort from the visitors, but it didn't arrive until the 35th minute, when David Ijaha collected the ball before running through the entire midfield with it! Sadly, his long-range shot wasn't as impressive as his run, and the ball flew high and over the top.

As for the hosts, it's fair to say that they looked more positive at first, as their direct play opened up more options. Paul Hodges saw his shot blocked by the Dartford defence as early as the fifth minute, before a Guy Hollis long throw found Ryan Bird, who sent a header wide of Ethan Wady's goal (15).

The Rebels' pressure almost paid off seven minutes later, after a mistake from Wady forced his captain, Tom Bonner, into clearing the imminent danger. The big defender stood tall seconds later, as he made a superb defensive block from a Rebel attack. He would complete his hatrick of blocks by preventing a Warren Harris drive from heading goal-bound in the 29th minute.

Ethan Wady weighed in with a terrific low save from Hodges two minutes later, but the young goalkeeper was picking the ball up from inside his goal with six minutes of the half remaining. As the Darts lost possession, Josh Jackman was allowed the space to get into the box and then send a low drive across and beyond Wady.

Seemingly in control, Slough should have punished the visitors again after Hodges breached the defence. Thankfully, he couldn't quite hit the target (41), but that miss was irrelevant four minutes into the second half...

Not happy with how the first-half went, Steve King immediately made two substitutions at the beginning of the second forty-five. Jordan Wynter and Noor Husin entered the field to replace Josh Hill and new signing Jernade Meade in what looked like a shuffling of formation.

The Dartford boss would be even less happy four minutes later, when a ball appeared to ricochet off of a rushing-out Wady, leaving the goalkeeper in no man's land, and Harris with an empty goal to tuck the ball into.

Now in complete control, the hosts looked to kill the game off, and would have a string of corners from the 66th minute onwards. Before that, however, Dartford threw caution to the wind by introducing striker Moussa Bakayoko for David Ijaha in the 58th minute. And what an inspiring move that proved to be!

As the visitors took a little time adjusting to the changes, Elliott Romain was fouled for the second time in quick succession, leaving Jack Jebb with a free-kick in a dangerous position on the hour. Unfortunately, his curling drive missed everyone and smacked Jack Turner's upright. Seven minutes later saw Tom Bonner and Sam Togwell have a little altercation after a Slough corner, which earned them both a yellow card.

With 72 minutes on the clock, the momentum switched with some superb play from the visitors. And it was Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong and Moussa Bakayoko who combined to play a neat one-two, which tore open the Slough defence and allowed Berkeley-Agyepong to shoot beyond Turner, thus pulling his side back into the contest.

Four minutes later saw Bakayoko at it again, as he scored the equaliser and delivered a sucker punch into the hearts of the hosts. The goal arrived after more great play from Dartford, which led to Noor Husin being fouled by Aaron Khul. Jack Jebb's beautiful free-kick swung into the box, forcing Turner to parry the ball, which fell straight into the path of Bakayoko. The substitute slotted the ball home to bring the game level at 2-2.

Four minutes ago the visitors looked dead and buried, yet now they were on the front-foot and forced their first corner of the game in the 84th minute! The fact that it came after Guy Hollis had almost lobbed his own goalkeeper is irrelevant, but Jebb couldn't quite direct his corner towards one of his teammates.

With the game poised for the lottery of penalties, the Darts finished the stronger and could have nicked it deep into stoppage time. Husin fed a delightful ball towards Berkeley-Agyepong, who then cut inside but shot wide of Turner's post, leaving both teams facing the penalty spot...

The first four spot-kicks were dispatched well, as Jack Barham, Ryan Bird, Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong, and Dan Roberts all scored. Jack Turner saved Jack Jebb's attempt, before Jack McKnight, Noor Husin, Aaron Kuhl, and Elliott Romain scored theirs. Then Louis Lomas missed the target, meaning that the sides faced sudden death with the score locked at 4-4.

Craig Braham-Barrett, Jack Turner, and Jordan Wynter all scored, before Josh Jackman missed the target and sent his side crashing out of the tournament.

And so the Darts dug deep to come from 2-0 down to earn themselves a place in the next round, where they'll host Haringey Borough FC at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park on Saturday.

TEAMS

SLOUGH TOWN: Jack Turner, Josh Jackman, Louis Lomas, Sam Togwell, Guy Hollis, Lee Togwell, Matthew Lench, Warren Harris, Aaron Kuhl, Ryan Bird, Paul Hodges

SUBSTITUTES: Dan Roberts, Sean Fraser, Jack McKnight, Michael Edegbe

DARTFORD: Ethan Wady, Connor Essam, Josh Hill, Tom Bonner ©, Craig Braham-Barratt, David Ijaha, Jernade Meade, Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong, Jack Jebb, Elliott Romain, Jack Barham

SUBSTITUTES: Moussa Bakayoko, Jordan Wynter, Luke Allen, Noor Husin, Ky Marsh-Brown

By Chris Palmer