

## Match Report

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

Dartford FC 1 AFC Hornchurch 1 (*Friendly*)

*Community Pitch – Princes Park*

**Dartford U18 Vs. AFC Hornchurch U18**

The game was a welcome opportunity to blow away the cobwebs and to get some much needed match practise given the recent spell of a lack of competitive action.

Hornchurch arrived at Princes Park having lost just once this season (in the FA Youth Cup) and having dropped points in just two competitive fixtures this season, and having avoided a league defeat in the last two years!

The game was always going to be difficult but both sides immediately got the ball down and started to play. The Hornchurch play was very swift and both wide players saw a lot of the ball early on. Dartford took a more measured approach and soon got in to their stride by playing the ball about at a high tempo. Both sides created chances early on but some good defending and robust challenges ensured that no one got the upper hand! Dartford went close through James Jordan, Danny Crouch and Matty Man but we couldn't find a way past the opposing goalie. At the other end, the Darts goal-keeper played his part by pulling off some good saves and commanding his box well.

Dartford seemed to grow in to the game following some minor adjustments in midfield, and from this point on you seemed to get the feeling that we would get something from the game. As a friendly, the game was split in to thirds, and come the end of the first third, the game remained scoreless.

The Darts management team were forced in to one change, Ashley Issuree replacing Harley Forbes, who had gone over on his ankle. Apart from that, the same team took to the field for the 2<sup>nd</sup> period. The game remained tight and following the introduction of Billy Senington and Jo-Jo Baiden, Dartford continued to match their opponents.

20 minutes in to the second period Hornchurch took the lead when a gap appeared in the Dartford defence and the forward lobbed Billy Senington to open the scoring. This was one of those goals that you hate to concede as it was down to switching off rather than a mistake which left the Darts goalie exposed and vulnerable due to the amount of time that the forward had to pick his spot. Dartford continued to press and finished the second period a little deflated as they felt a little hard done by to be behind. However, the Darts management due of Andy & Cen soon pointed a few players in the right direction and pointed out that they had so far matched a very good side stride for stride.

The remaining subs of Callum Nye, Grant Wilks & Danny Nash joined the action. This added a different dimension to Dartford and chances continued to come and go for both sides. A change in formation followed when the hard working Lewis Sutherland was given a well deserved rest and James Jordan returned to the game to complete a 3-4-3 formation. This appeared to pay off immediately and Dartford continued to create chances, notably for Danny Crouch who came close to scoring from close range. In particular, Dartford looked dangerous at set pieces and this proved to be the defining factor in the game. With five minutes remaining, Danny Crouch rose for a header from a corner and the on rushing Hornchurch goal keeper ended up on the floor. The ball was cleared as far as captain Sean Heather, and his curling shot from 25 yards found the net for a well-deserved equaliser. Clearly the opposing team were upset, claiming a foul on the goalie and their anger led to some harsh words being exchanged between the players. Tempers were not helped by the "Hornchurch" assistant referee entering the field of play to remonstrate with the ref. It was all needless heat of the moment stuff but I am sure that on reflection, those involved will agree that to end a game in that way doesn't put anyone in a good light.

Dartford deserved something from the game but credit must also go to Hornchurch who played their part in a testing, physical game that neither side deserved to lose. The hand bags at the end certainly didn't spoil my enjoyment of the game and give me a stern test over a walk-over any day of the week!

The under 18's get back to league action next Tuesday evening with a 7.45pm k.o. against Corinthian. This is a must win game if we are to preserve our aspirations of finishing as high up in the league as possible. The game is sure to have an edge to it given the number of players that moved club since the summer but most important is that the benefit of the Hornchurch game is put to good use and that the lads put on a rust-free performance!

**Team:-** *Bill Senington, Lewis Sutherland, Harley Forbes, Tom Eysers, Jack Walter, Luke White, Jorden Keenleyside, Danny Crouch, Sean Heather, James Jordan, Matthew Man.*

**Subs:-** *Dan McNeill-Nash, JoJo Baiden, Ashley Issuree, Grant Wilks, Callum Nye*

**Goal:-** *Sean Heather*

**MOTM x 2!:- *Lewis Sutherland & Luke White as they both worked non-stop up and down the left-hand side.***



**Lewis Sutherland**



**Luke White**