

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008**  
**Dartford U18's 2 Lordswood U18's 1**

Having had the last two games postponed due to bad weather, we were blowing away the rain/sleet clouds to make sure this match against Lordswood went ahead. With 7 players missing from the squad due to work and other commitments, we had to piece together a team, putting players in positions they wasn't used to and call on two U16's players to bolster the squad.

A minutes silence was observed impeccably by both teams, officials and supporters in memory of a Tonbridge Angels Youth player who died suddenly the weekend before.

The game started, and spectators hadn't even got to their seats, when Lordswood took the lead after a shaky start from the U18's defence. A series of defensive blunders allowed a Lordswood player to head the ball home. This was disappointing as the goal could have been cut out at so many stages before the ball was put in the net. The early goal unsettled Dartford and it took them a while to settle into their own game. Dartford started to create chances notably for Danny Crouch who was playing in an unfamiliar forward role. There was plenty of effort from Dartford but given the number of changes and the enforced unfamiliarity of their new positions for some players, the display looked disjointed and resulted in a lot of possession being squandered. If anything, Lordswood were unlucky not to add to their score when they were denied by Ibrahim in the Dartford goal, when he palmed over a header from point blank range. **Half-Time score 0-1** - The half time "*chat*" centred around the players being reminded of what was said to them 45 minutes ago! The 2<sup>nd</sup> half started much better for Dartford and the determination of the home team was apparent from the first whistle. 5 minutes into the half the Dartford no 6 - Tom Eyers - suffered a knee injury when executing a block tackle. Unfortunately for Tom he had to leave the field on a stretcher and pay a visit to his 2<sup>nd</sup> home (Darent Valley Hospital), best wishes to Tom on a speedy recovery. Tom's replacement was Karl Dent, a promising player from the U16s squad. The adversity seemed to galvanise the home side and they soon drew level when some midfield play enabled Keenleyside to slot the ball home despite a good effort by the visiting goal keeper. Unfortunately for the goal keeper, the ball looped up off of him into the goal. Further chances came for Dartford, including a miss by Luke White when the ball arrived quickly to him following some great play on the Dartford left. Dartford were then forced into a 2<sup>nd</sup> change when the unfortunate JoJo Baiden had to be replaced by our 2<sup>nd</sup> U16's player Aaron Smith. In the 75<sup>th</sup> minute a surging run by right back Jack Walter culminating in him chipping the goal keeper from the right hand corner of the box and putting the young Darts into the lead. The last 15 minutes saw further chances for both sides with Karl Dent firing just over from 25 yards while Dartford had some great defensive blocks by Harley Forbes and Aaron Smith aswell as some great goalkeeping by Ibrahim that kept the score at 2-1. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half was a much improved performance and the win puts us 1 point behind the leaders. This was a very rewarding win for the players. The players took on board what was said at half time and responded - a manager could not ask for more from his players. The introduction to U18's football for the U16's players will stand them in good stead for next season. Neither player looked out of place and showed just what an abundance of quality that the Youth system at Dartford consists of. Another bright spot was the return to the squad of Sami Kadri, who has been absent for many weeks due to illness. Welcome back Sami.

This Sunday sees a showdown between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place teams with the visit of Erith Town. This will be a different test entirely as the visitors are in with a great shout of winning the division. I am sure the players will take on board the lessons learnt throughout the season and give it their all in what will be a very tough fixture.

**Team:** Ibrahim, Walter, White(C), Issuree, Forbes, Keenleyside, Crouch, Nye, Baiden (Smith 70), Eyers (Dent 50), Man

**Subs not used:** Kadri

**Goals:** Keenleyside (60) Walter (75)

**MOTM:-** Whole Team - for listening at half-time and taking on board what was said! 