

<http://www.dartfordfc.co.uk/reserves.htm>

## **Henno's Notes**

I am very disappointed to report that the reserves unfortunately failed to win the league cup on Saturday when we were beaten 2-1 by Ashford Town. I said to the players before the game that I was very proud of what we had achieved this season and I felt that we were fully prepared, both mentally and physically, but it wasn't to be. To be fair to Ashford, they were a very good team who passed the ball well and we struggled to stay with them in the first twenty minutes. You could tell that they had been together as a team for two or three years, and they had up front the two top scorers in their division who were a constant threat. However we did get ourselves back in the game and finished the half well and then put them under further pressure early in the second half where we had chances to equalise which we didn't take. They then hit us on the break with a long ball when we were attacking their goal which made the score 2-0 with twenty five minutes to go and you just new then that it wasn't going to be our day. I was pleased that we scored in the final minutes as we deserved a goal for our efforts but it was too little to late and the game was lost.

When you sit in the changing room after losing a final and you see faces , some in tears, it is very hard to offer any words of consolation that can make things right. The silence from players that have worked so hard all season to win a trophy and have put in an enormous amount of effort over many months was heart breaking, but I had told them before the game how proud I was of them, and although we had come up short on the day, I was still very proud of each and every one of them!

Henno

16 April 2008 12:48

In terms of entertainment, I think all those that came along to the game against Erith Town last night certainly got value for their money. As the game developed, a combination of events on the pitch, together with the news coming through on the result from the Sudbury match, led to the vocal support from the choir getting louder and louder, creating a fantastic atmosphere particularly in the second half. In the end, five goals, two penalties, a sending off, a couple of altercations between the players, three valuable points and the first team promoted...quite a night!!

I was very pleased with the final result as we need to get maximum points from our remaining league games to guarantee the runners up position, which I believe we deserve for the great football we have played throughout the season. However, to accommodate the four first team squad players into the starting eleven, it meant I changed the formation which we struggled with at times with people caught out of position, which was to be expected. However, we created some good chances and could have been three nil up at half time but Erith cleared one off the line and then a fantastic last ditch tackle kept them in the game. Following Erith pulling things back to 2-2, I was relieved that we were awarded a penalty which Westy calmly converted for his twenty third goal of the season, and I felt we finished the game strongly and were unlucky not to extend the lead further.

Last week we beat Herne Bay 6-0 with another strong all round performance, but unfortunately Chatham won their final game last night to beat us to a place in the floodlit final by a single point.

This Saturday we travel to Whitstable for our league cup final against Ashford Town which I am sure will be a great day out for everyone. The only disappointment is that the game clashes with the first team fixture, as I know that many of you would have come along to support us if the league would have had the common sense to have played the game on a Sunday.

Thanks again for your continued support of the reserves.

Henno

Mon 07/04/2008 17:15

When you reach the last few weeks of a long season you want to be in a position to still be fighting for trophy's, and you want every game to matter. The three games we have played in the last seven days have been real edge of your seat stuff with big points at stake.

Maidstone away was always going to be tough, having beaten them in the quarter final only a few weeks before. Things were not helped when we found ourselves 2-0 down after only ten minutes playing against a gale force wind. However, we got through to half time, went three at the back, two up top with one behind, and went for broke. Tom Bradbrook, having taken a lot of stick from their bench in the first half, scored two great headers to draw us level and shared his joy with their management as he celebrated, which I thought was considerate of him, then we scored the winner in the last minute. Things did become heated after the game, but if you are going to give a good team stick when you are only at half time, you leave yourself wide open if that team refuse to lose and come back and hit you hard.

Chatham on the Tuesday night was a game we needed to win to try and qualify for the final as winners of our group in the floodlit trophy. Having lost to them by the odd goal twice earlier in the season, it was always going to be a close match. I thought we were very good in the first half, keeping the ball well and were unfortunate to reach half time only one goal ahead, but then in the second half they came out strong. Although our defence was excellent, we unfortunately couldn't hold out until the end and they equalised with five minutes to go to stay one point ahead of us. We go to Herne Bay this week to try and get three points in our final game of the competition, which would mean that Chatham would have to win at home the following week to beat us to the final by one point, a draw for them would see us through, if we can beat Herne Bay, exciting stuff.

Last Saturday we played Thamesmead, again a game we needed to win to stand a chance of winning the league, but unfortunately we only managed a draw. Their manager was overheard saying to his players that Dartford were the best team in the league, and I think they were too embarrassed to celebrate as they were out on their feet having chased our youngsters all afternoon. Sometimes you don't get what you deserve in terms of results, but I was very proud of the way the players performed against a very experienced team, and I said in the changing room that the most important thing was how we play and improve as a team, and as individuals looking to progress within Dartford Football Club.

Following our trip to Herne Bay on Wednesday, we are not in action until the following Tuesday when we entertain Erith Town at home in the league, followed by our League Cup Final against Ashford Town on the Saturday.

Hope to see you next Tuesday where we would really appreciate your support.

Henno

**Sent:** 25 March 2008 16:12

When you have a squad of players who work so hard you do sometimes get what you deserve, and yesterday's 4-2 aggregate win over Margate in the league cup semi final was a just reward for that effort. Having lost our other semi final a few weeks ago on a penalty shoot out, the players showed over the two legs against Margate, a resolve and desire to win which has seen us through to a final against Ashford Town, on a date and venue to be announced. The reports I have had of Ashford is that they are a very good team who like to pass the ball which will suit us perfectly, as we try to play the same way, so it sounds as if it should be an entertaining game.

I am keen now to put the final to one side and concentrate on our league programme over the remaining weeks of the season as we have some very important league games ahead. With six games to go and all the top four sides due to play each other, I believe if we show the same desire and attitude we have recently, we won't be far away. I will be hoping to introduce into the squad some players from the under eighteens in these games, as I believe they have shown that some of them are more than ready to make the step up. One of these players is Danny Crouch who came on yesterday and scored an excellent goal showing great composure, this on the back of having scored two goals the day before for the under eighteens. Whilst it is important to try and be successful, I am also very aware of the need to try and develop the young players we have within the squad, and I think the fact we had four sixteen year olds on the bench over the two semi final legs shows that players can be brought through when the time is right, and can be added to a young reserve team squad that is playing football in the right manner.

We are at home next Tuesday to Chatham in the floodlit trophy who are one point above us with two games to go in the floodlit league, so that should be another entertaining evening as the team will again be a mixture of first team squad and reserve players which has worked well in the last few games, so I hope you will be there to cheer us on.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support

Henno

Mon 17/03/2008 17:02

Following our disappointing semi final loss to Cray on a penalty shoot out, I am delighted to report that the team have responded very well in the last seven days with a 2-0 home win in the league against Ramsgate, and a 1-0 away win in the first leg of our league cup semi final at Margate last Saturday. The attitude of the players and their desire to win is great to see as we enter the final stages of the season. The league is still wide open with all the top teams due to meet each other over the next few weeks. We have six games remaining, and are due to entertain both Thamesmead and Sevenoaks at home, both of whom are currently above us in the table, but can catch, subject to winning games in hand.

During the week we entertained Tunbridge Wells in the floodlit trophy which we drew 1-1. The team included a number of first team squad players and provided an opportunity for a number of them to play ninety minutes. Also Jay May was able to get back on the pitch following his suspension and get a game under his belt.. Training is all well and good but there is nothing like a competitive match to blow away any cobwebs and I think the evening was a good exercise all round. It is always difficult to effectively put two sets of players together and ask them to play as a team, but I was pleased with the attitude and manner in which we tried to play. With two six foot plus forwards it would have been very easy just to crash the ball up to them and play from there, however, I asked everyone to keep the ball on the floor as much as possible and pass our way from back to front, which I felt we did, and although there were chances for both teams to win, I felt a draw was a fair result.

We have no game now until bank holiday Monday when we entertain Margate in the second leg of our Semi Final, and is a three O'clock kick off. The reason I mention this is I understand that the first team game away to Canvey kicks off at one, so if any of you are coming back to the ground, rather than go straight home, we would welcome any support you could give us as your extra vocal support might be what we need to reach the league cup final.

Henno

04 March 2008 17:12

To lose any match on penalties is a disappointment, but to lose a semi final in that way is an awful way to be knocked out. To compound the misery, due to the playing conditions of the pitch it was probably the worst game of football we have been involved in to date this season. Having come off such a good performance against Faversham on the Tuesday night, we were as a team going into the match full of confidence. However, the words of their manager at our league meeting only a few weeks before, where he refused to swap the venue for the semi final after we had beaten them 4-0, became clear when we saw the condition of their pitch. You could have cut the grass with a pair of tweezers as I think there were about three blades on it. The pitch was rock hard mud and totally uneven, making it impossible to pass the ball on the floor, holes had to be filled in with sand before the game started and then a high wind meant the opposition kicked the ball as far and as high as they could and then chased after it. I offered Brad Potter and Grant Cunningham some Anadin at half time with their drinks. I know I sound bitter and twisted but when you have worked so hard for something and played some great football on the way, to lose in the manner we did against a team who admitted they didn't want to play us on a proper football pitch leaves you with a sour taste.

On a brighter note, we still have much to play for as we are still fighting for a high position in the league, also we have four wins from five games in the floodlit trophy with another home game next Tuesday evening, and the small matter of a two legged semi final against Margate in the league cup.

I would like to thank those of you that came to watch us last Tuesday. The inclusion of the first team squad players added that extra bit of quality, and I was really pleased with the attitude of the team and the manner of our football on the night. I asked all the players to express themselves and enjoy the evening and to entertain, not through showing off, but by working hard for each other, and playing with a style and pace which I was delighted to see we did.

We are at home in the league this Saturday and again Tuesday evening in the floodlit trophy, so I hope some of you can come along and cheer on the team again.

Regards

Henno

Fri 22/02/2008 10:47

Three penalties, one sending off, a header that hit the net and was then cleared away and not deemed to have crossed the goal line, and some further referee decisions that made you wonder if he was offering the game as a tribute to the late Jeremy Beadle!

The day got off to a controversial start when we were shown the referee's changing room and told that this was indeed to be our dressing room due to the lack of available facilities. Fifteen players, fifteen individual kitbags, football kit, medical bag etc in a room designed for three, with me ending up conducting my team talk from the showers! If anything, this made us even more determined to reach our second semi final and I was delighted with the attitude of the players and their desire to win. Having gone one nil down against the run of play, Dave Moore won us a penalty which was converted by Westy. In the second half I felt we retained the ball better and created some good chances to score. The move of the game following some great first time passing was finished with some style with Tom Bradbrook volleying home a shot from twenty yards with his left foot, which took his record to three goals in three games. However, the referee got himself back in the game following a quiet ten minute spell for him when he awarded Maidstone a penalty, making the score two each with twenty minutes left. We then proceed to go up the other end and following a scramble in their box the ref gives us a penalty, although not a single one of my players appealed for one. Westy scored sending the keeper the wrong way again, 3-2. However, the ref managed to save his best till last when Tom Bradbrook was put through one on one with their keeper and was about to shoot when he was cynically chopped down from behind on the edge of their box by their centre half. The referee awarded the free kick and as we all waited for the red card he walked away to judge the distance for the wall. Tom asked the ref why he was not sending off the player and was told that he was not the last defender, the goalkeeper was!!! As we left the pitch someone shouted out, 'why don't you do everyone a favour and retire ref?', his consistent performance right to the end meant he didn't see who said it, personally I think it was the linesman!

Tomorrow we are at home to Whitstable in the league followed by a home game on Tuesday night against Faversham in the floodlit trophy. With six of our remaining eight league games at home and three of our four floodlit games also, I feel we are in a great position to enter the last third of the season where we are still challenging for honours on all four fronts. As always, if you are able to come and support the players it would be great to see you.

Henno

12 February 2008 14:17

Following our defeat to Thamesmead the previous week, I was delighted with the reaction of the players last Saturday at home to Cray Wanderers. In what was always going to be a tough and robust game, we played some excellent football moving the ball around with pace and purpose. Brad Potter made a welcome return having been out injured for many weeks, and between him and Jamie Lawrence, won the midfield area allowing us to drive forward at their defence time and time again. Although Brad came off as a precaution at half time, he will again be involved with us this Saturday when we visit Maidstone in the quarter final of the league cup.

Tom Bradbrook scored for the second time in two games with a confident finish and is benefiting from the run of games he is having with us at the moment. The idea is for Tom to be match fit and ready to play should he be selected for the first team, to cover Jay's suspension, which follows this Saturdays' game. I would also like to congratulate Westy who on Saturday scored another two goals to take his tally to sixteen in the last nineteen games. He is always one of the players who stays on the pitch following our training sessions to practise his finishing, which has paid dividends in the quality of his goals so far this season.

With six of our remaining eight league games due to take place at Princes Park, together with three of our remaining four floodlit league games also, I feel we have a great opportunity to continue to play in the same manner on a great pitch which suits our style of play. We also have this weeks quarter final to look forward to and our forthcoming semi final to Cray Wanderers, as well as now going into second place in the league, so there is plenty to play for. I did ask the Cray manager if he would consider switching the semi final to our ground rather than play at Oxford Road before our game on Saturday. However, following our fourth goal he turned round and told me in no uncertain terms where to stick my suggestion, telling me we wont be able to play our football on their poor pitch.....worth asking I suppose.

Henno

04 February 2008 15:32

I have now had forty eight hours to reflect on Saturdays disappointing result, losing 2-1 away to Thamesmead. To concede their second goal in the final minute of the game was hard to take, especially after we had dominated the second half in particular. We continued to play neat passing football on what was a difficult uneven surface, moving the ball around the pitch well with pace and quality from back to front, resisting the temptation to simply launch long hopeful balls forward. What I found hard to understand was that their team was a very experienced mature side, with several players in their thirties who had obviously been around the Kent League scene a long time, which for me kind of defeats the object of a reserve team. Without meaning to sound bitter and twisted, when you consider the majority of my squad is less than twenty one and still learning, it is clear that other teams have different objectives when it comes to the development of young players through their club. An example of this is that the winning goal was scored by Dean Bowey, now forty three, and a player who I and Paul Sawyer played with under the management of Tony Burman, all those years ago!

Still, we move on now to our next game which is a home tie against Cray Wanderers this Saturday, which should prove to be a very tough game as we currently sit one point behind them in the league. That is then followed by an opportunity to reach our second semi final when we travel to Maidstone the following week.

On the playing front I was delighted to see three of my players feature in the game away to Ebbsfleet, which was a great experience for them to play against the calibre of their players and in such a great occasion. Again I must say another big thank you to Tony for giving a number of my players the opportunity to have featured in the two first team cup runs this season, when it would have been easy to have played the more established players. I feel my players have shown the supporters the quality in depth the club have now at their disposal, and is testament to the hard work that goes on behind the scenes.

Again I would ask you to come and support the reserves if and when you are available, subject to first team commitments obviously.

Best wishes

Henno

Tue 22/01/2008 10:18

Following our 4-1 win at home to Hythe last Saturday, I am delighted to say we have now reached the semi final stage of the Kent Intermediate cup where we will play the winners of Sittingbourne and Cray Wanderers, unfortunately away from home. We played particularly well in the first half coming in at half time three nil up, with great pace and movement all round the pitch. Although not intentional, the second half was a little bit flat and we wasted a couple of good opportunities to extend our lead further. Having conceded a penalty for their goal I was delighted for Danny Crouch, a sixteen year old from our under eighteen team, who scored our fourth having come on as sub in the last fifteen minutes.

To bring you up to speed on a few internal matters, Joe Horlock has decided to move to Slade Green as he was becoming frustrated at his limited first team opportunities. I had spent a considerable amount of time over the last few weeks explaining to Joe that in the position the first team are currently in, it was going to take time for Joe to progress into the squad on a full time basis but he had already been able to show his quality in the midweek cup competitions, and would have been involved at Heybridge and Ebbsfleet in addition to our two quarter finals and fight for the league title. In a meeting on Thursday with Tony, we offered him the opportunity to go on loan to a Ryman League side where he could gain some first team experience whilst staying within the club, which he declined. I am obviously very disappointed that he has chosen to go to a side currently second bottom in the Kent League with nothing to play for, as I feel he has been badly advised by people around him who have given him false promises of improving his career within a team fighting relegation. I do wish Joe all the best as he is a great talent and was excellent in the games he played for me.

Gazmand Dauhti has also left the club as he was not going to make the first team squad in the near future and he had other opportunities which he has decided to follow. Gaz was a really nice guy and I wish him every success also.

On a positive note I will be signing a young forward this week. Whitstable have recently offered him financial terms to join them, but having spent the last two weeks training with us, he is keen to join Dartford. As always, the management of the reserves is a work in progress, and I am delighted with the performance and the attitude of the players as we continue our challenge for silverware on all fronts.

Best Wishes

Henno

16 January 2008 18:44

Following the cancellation of last Saturdays game at Thamesmead due to a waterlogged pitch, I was able to come and watch the first teams' convincing win against Ilford. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who came up to me, either in the bar, or outside while I was queuing for a cup of tea, (is it always like that by the way...15 minutes it took to get served!!), to congratulate me on the performances and results of the reserves so far this season. It really is nice to know that people are genuinely interested in how the reserves are doing; you seem to like the manner and style of football we are playing, and are pleased at the prospect of one or two perhaps coming through in the not too distant future.

We had a very hard training session on Monday evening lasting almost two hours, which I hope has blown away any cobwebs, and I am pleased to report that I have a full squad to pick from for this Saturday. As you maybe aware, we are due to play the first of our two quarter finals at home to Hythe this week, and I have asked Peter Martin to seek permission from the league, and also agreement from Hythe, to move the game to the community pitch should the main pitch be in any way doubtful, and also to avoid any unnecessary damage when we have a fantastic alternative facility to play on.

Again I would ask you for your support should you not be travelling to watch the first team this week as I am sure it will be a very entertaining game to watch as always.

Best Wishes

Henno

Margate: Home 5<sup>th</sup> January

In football sometimes you don't always get what you deserve for your efforts and that is how I felt after Saturdays game. Having led the game three times, we managed somehow to allow Margate to leave with a point, and also score four goals in one match when we had to date only conceded nine in the previous eleven matches. Their goals were scored from two free kicks which we failed to clear, a goalkeeper error and finally a penalty that they were awarded in the final ten minutes which they never even appealed for, I don't know who was more shocked at the decision, them or us? To add insult to injury we were then denied a penalty ourselves when one of their players clearly handballed in their area in the final minutes of the game, only yards from the linesman, a real spec savers moment if ever there was one! Although it was a game we needed to win, all is not lost as there are still ten games to go, and we have all the top teams around us to play, starting this Saturday with our trip to Thamesmead in a first vs. second clash. I said to the players that I would be more worried if we had drawn not having played well but I thought we were excellent at times. We attacked with pace and skill and got behind their defence all afternoon creating many chances, and I am sure that if we approach Saturday with the same effort and desire we wont be far away. Also this week Jamie Lawrence is available to play having returned to the club and Gaz is back from his holiday in Albania so the squad is back to full strength having both missed the Margate game. Next week we are at home to Hythe in the first of our two back to back quarter finals, and I would be grateful if you can come and support the guys should you not be going with the first team that day.

Henno

## Whitstable Town: Away 22<sup>nd</sup> December

The last game before the xmas break was very important in that the 3-0 win moved the reserves into second place in the table, at exactly the half way stage of the league programme. From the eleven league games played, eight of them have been away from home, which is a testament to the character shown by the players for having to travel to the furthest parts of Kent week after week which is never easy. Having played Whitstable only a few weeks before we knew that it was going to be a tough game, but we started very strongly and once we scored our first goal after fifteen minutes, we were always in control and caused them problems all afternoon. The Whitstable manager was very complimentary of Dartford saying afterwards that the score line flattered them as the result could have been far worse for them. The game also gave me an opportunity to look at Gazmund Dauhti, a player who had been training with us for three weeks. Gaz, is a central midfield player who is very skilful, strong and hard working. Originally from Albania, he has played for a number of clubs since being in the UK which I feel has been the main problem for him. Whilst he is a good player, jumping around from one club to another is not doing him any favours as he needs to establish himself over a period of time, and although I understand his desire to play in our first team now, I have explained to him that a period of stability between now and the end of the season within the reserves will benefit him and his football, and the opportunity to progress from within the club will happen along with other members of the squad when it is decided they are ready to do so.

Henno

17.12.2007

Another strong and convincing performance saw us pick up three points away to Erith Town on Saturday, making it five wins and a draw from our last six games. I was especially pleased as we were forced into making several changes in personnel from our last game, due to illness and various unavoidable commitments. However, the players that came in, who have been waiting patiently for their opportunity over the last few weeks, performed very well, as we continued to play our high tempo attacking football which proved too much for our opponents to contain. For those of you that have been to Erith Town, it is a very hard place to play as every time the ball goes off it takes for ever to get back into play due to the running track around the outside of the pitch, which gave our opponents time to re group when we were putting them under pressure. Still, the players showed great desire and character regardless of the surroundings which we need to show if we are to continue our current run of form. Our goals came from Javal Stewart, Joe Horlock and Grant Cunningham.

This Saturday we are away again, this time to Whitstable in the league. They are the highest scoring team in our division and although we beat them a few weeks ago down there 3-1 in the cup, I fully expect another tough game where we will have to be at our best to get three points. An added incentive will be that should we win we will move into second place in the league table, putting us only three points behind Thamesmead who we have yet to play. It will also see us reach Xmas with us in the quarter final of the Kent Senior Cup, the last sixteen of the league cup and top of the midweek floodlit league, and therefore lots to look forward to in the New Year!

Best Wishes

Henno

12.12.2007

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to the Dartford 'die hard supporters' who stood, without cover, in the driving wind and rain last Saturday afternoon cheering on the reserve team. There was even a stage in the second half when they broke out into song with 'come on you Darts' ringing around the community pitch! All the players and management team really appreciated your support when I am sure, following the cancellation of the first team game, there were other places you could have been, like in front of the t.v. and in the warm. However, I hope you will agree that the performance by the players was worth getting wet for in what was I felt a very entertaining game with some great football played in very difficult conditions. I was very pleased with the way we kept the ball on the floor and played high tempo football with pace and quality. All the defenders looked comfortable on the ball and that enabled us to switch the play, get the ball into the feet of the midfield players who then in turn linked with the forward and wide players well. I thought we scored some excellent goals with great passing and movement which enabled us to stretch their defence time and time again. This result has put us through to the quarter final with a home tie to come, and gave us a record of four wins and a draw from our last five games.

The first team cup competitions have in the last couple of weeks given the opportunity for some of my players to play and taste first team action which I know they have thoroughly enjoyed, and I personally feel they have all contributed well to the successful results. With five or six of them on the pitch during each game, I feel they are capable of making the step up into the first team squad if and when required which I am really pleased to see, as it proves to them that there is a genuine opportunity for my players to push on which is not always the case in some clubs. I am grateful to Tony for showing faith in my recommendations and allowing my players to play as it would have been easy just to have put out the first team for fear of getting knocked out and then leaving himself open to criticism for fielding under strength teams.

For those of you that maybe unaware, Jamie Lawrence has decided to leave the club to join Erith and Belvedere. Jamie was a pleasure to manage as he always trained and played with a desire and commitment to improve his game, but felt that his first team opportunities were limited and therefore for the sake of his career he felt it was best for him to move on. Although I am disappointed and sorry to see Jamie leave, as he has been integral to the success of the reserve team this season, I fully understand his decision and wish him every success in his move as do all the staff and players of Dartford FC.

Henno

27.11.2007

Margate in November, where else would you want to be? Freezing cold, a bitter wind and driving rain, and in the portakabin which was the changing room, a small wall heater that seemed to be blowing out even colder air than that outside! Still, we had the hot food to look forward to after the game which we had been promised, the problem was by the time we reached the bar all the food had been eaten by the Margate players, who I can only presume must have then gone home to have their showers as the bar was deserted, along with the food trays, within ten minutes of the final whistle.

A day therefore I described to the players as a test of character. It is easy to get yourself up for home games at PP, but as this was to be a third consecutive away game on the Kent coast, I wanted to finish our final game of the month with our fourth consecutive win, and I can honestly say it was not for the want of trying. In the first half we kicked uphill against the wind and fell behind to an early free kick that we failed to clear which finally came off a player's toe, who I think was too embarrassed to celebrate. After that we got ourselves going and had two very good chances to equalize, the first from Sean Eferakho, who was put through one on one with the keeper but whose shot was well saved, and the second from Tamer Bilal, a centre half who from twelve yards was unfortunate to hit the bar with their keeper well beaten. There was no need to panic as I felt sure that we would score in the second half, and we continued to play with great pace and width, with Joe Horlock playing telling passes in the final third in his free role. The goal came with around twenty minutes to go when, after a good move down the left; the ball was pulled back to the edge of the box where Sean fired home the equalizer. Although camped in their half for the entire final twenty minutes, we were unfortunately unable to find the winner as Margate pulled everyone behind the ball, leaving just one up front to try and hit us on the break while we had so many men committed forward searching for the winner.

Although disappointed not to win the game, I was delighted with the attitude and desire shown by the players, in what were very difficult conditions, as we still tried to play football on the floor with pace and skill, rather than chasing the goal by just kicking hit and hope balls into the box. We ended the month therefore with three wins and a draw.

Our next game is not until we entertain Folkestone at home in the cup next Saturday, followed by another two away games taking us up to Xmas.

As I always ask, if you are not following the first team or Xmas shopping, it would be great to see you at the Folkestone game supporting the lads next Saturday.

Without pre judging the team, I am hopeful that a few of my players will be involved next Tuesday evening in the cup game against Whitstable, where I hope they will impress many of you as before against Averley.

Best Wishes

Henno

19.11.2007

For a number of reasons, I am delighted to report that November has, to date, been a very successful month for the reserves. The first thing for me to mention is the pride I felt in the wonderful debut performances of Sean Eferakho and Joe Horlock when they recently appeared for the first team against Averley. Both players were signed following the summer trials I held, Sean having just been released by Gillingham, a decision I find hard to understand, and Joe, who had spent eighteen months with Watford, but following his release had somewhat lost his way for a time. For those of you that were there that night and saw Sean making surging runs up and down the right wing, I promise you he does that every game for us. His pace and fitness level is quite incredible, and this has been a fundamental reason for the success the reserve team has had so far this season. I encourage both full backs to get down the wings and make overlapping runs with telling crosses. When we have two wide midfield players with pace, supported by two attacking full backs, we are really putting teams on the back foot! Joe is a different type of player, his touch and passing abilities are exceptional and on Saturday I played him in a free role slightly behind the main striker. Against Whitstable he pulled the strings to the whole game, playing balls behind their defence for our wide men and forward to attack in the final third of the pitch. Joe finished the game having scored two goals from outside the box, both times finding space to receive passes pulled back to him from wide areas, then late in the game, he thread a perfectly weighted pass for Westie to run onto and drive into the bottom corner for our third goal, and Westie's eighth in twelve matches.

So far this month we have beaten Maidstone at home 1-0 in the league, followed by a 2-0 away win to Folkestone, again in the league, then on Saturday we beat Whitstable away 3-1 in the league cup. We finish off our trilogy of seaside away trips today at Margate, where I hope we continue our recent good form. Should we win our game in hand we will be second in the league with the top side to play twice, we are still top of the midweek floodlit league, and following last Saturday, we are now in the third round of the league cup.

I would like to give a special mention to Derren Ibriham, who at sixteen, made his debut for the reserves at Whitstable, following the recent nasty injury suffered by Dean James. Dean was taken to hospital during our game at Folkestone following a bad cut to his leg, but I am happy to report has now had his stitches removed and should resume training soon. Derren became the fifth player already to have played for the reserves this season from the under eighteen side, showing the depth of quality in the youth set up, and I would like to congratulate him for his very assured and confident display last Saturday.

I am sure we are due a home game soon and it would be great to see as many of you as possible cheering on the team. The idea is for these players to be pushing hard for first team opportunities and I believe some of them may not be far away, come and see what you think.

Best Wishes

Henno

6.11.2007

Having lost the previous two games, I am pleased to report that the reserves got back to winning ways with an important win at home to Maidstone last Saturday. In the centre of midfield I have three very good players to choose from in Jamie Lawrence, Joe Horlock and Luke May, and what I have been trying to do is fit them all into the team, at the expense of having pace and width on both wings, which in hindsight, I believe has played a big factor in the two previous poor results. However, on Saturday we played with two attacking wide players and two quick forwards in Tommy Youle and Westy, which got us back to playing high tempo, fast attacking football. Again missed opportunities made the game closer than it should have been with their manager shouting to his players with ten minutes to go that they had just managed their first shot on goal, and afterwards admitting in the bar that we had given them, 'a hammering'.

Today we travel to Folkestone in the league, followed by further away games to Whitstable in the league cup, and Margate, again in the league, later in the month. With the squad back to full strength following injuries and illness, I am now looking for us to push on in the games ahead to make sure we are challenging in all competitions.

If anyone fancies a day by the seaside over the next few weeks cheering us on you would be most welcome, I hear it's lovely by the coast this time of year!!

Henno

1.11.2007

Football is a funny old game but I am sorry to say that there was not much laughing in the changing room after our recent defeat to Sevenoaks. Having taken control of the first half, where we were unfortunate to go in at half time only one nil up, I impressed the importance of being careful and not losing concentration in the second half. I have played myself in many games during my career when you dominate a game, don't take your chances, and then get punished for one mistake. Unfortunately, we made two in five minutes. The first was when my centre half got the wrong side of their forward and in his haste to chase him, caught his foot in the box and gave away a penalty. To rub further salt into the wound he was then awarded a red card for being the last defender. I decided to leave only three at the back as I felt sure we could still go on and win the game with ten men, when my other centre half managed to hit a left foot screamer into the top corner from twelve yards, unfortunately he chose to bury it into our goal!! With ten minutes left and with three up front, we managed to create four great chances, all within ten yards, and managed somehow to miss them all!

I made my feelings implicitly clear to the players after the game as we had basically thrown the game away, against a team that were probably the weakest side we have played to date this season. It would be easy to blame inexperience and youth but it wasn't that, the players were careless and sloppy and have learned a lesson the hard way....three points wasted!

Henno

23.10.2007

At the beginning of October I looked at our schedule of six matches for the month, which included league and mid week cup games, and set the squad a target of winning all six. Having now played five of those matches I am pleased to report that the reserves have won four and lost one, with the final game due at Sevenoaks today. The reserves are top of the west section floodlit league with three wins from four games, three of those games having been played away from home, and with games in hand that would put us in the top three of the league, subject to winning them of course, I am therefore pleased with the month so far.

I think it is important for people to understand the age of some of the players we have in the squad. I looked at our team away to Faversham earlier this month for instance and realized that from the starting eleven I selected, the goalkeeper, three of the back four, and one midfield player were only eighteen, and three others nineteen. With so much youth in the squad there is an enormous energy and desire to improve as players and progress, but there is also sometimes an inexperience and lack of understanding to certain situations which is to be expected.

For those of you that have followed our results you would have noticed that the only team we have failed to beat this season is Chatham Town, who have now beaten us three times. I was pleased to discover that they are not allowed to keep us but disappointed to hear that my request to never play them again has been rejected by the league...only joking! After last Saturday's game there was no screaming, throwing of tea cups etc, we were beaten fair and square by a better team on the day. What I said to the players is that we must learn from the defeat, move on, get back to 'good habits', and by playing the fast paced attractive football we have been playing to date, hopefully pick up three points today, we shall see.

Best Wishes

Henno

10.10.2007

Following last night's 4-2 away win at Faversham in the floodlit trophy, I am delighted to report that the reserves have now won six of our first eight games of the season. As happy as I am with the start we have made, it is the manner in which we have played that has probably pleased me the most. The fact that the majority of the team is less than twenty one years old, four of whom are only eighteen, means the levels of fitness, pace and energy shown is proving too much to contain for most teams we have played to date, and we are now scoring at an average of over three goals a game!

Having worked so hard to bring in better quality players during the close season, it is clear to me that there is now a genuine opportunity for a number within the team to hopefully progress into the first team squad during the course of this season. It is important we continue to play with a desire to win every game and with a style of football that we will be recognized for, ball on the floor, full backs getting forward at every opportunity, high tempo two touch passing when possible.

For those of you as old as me that remember that old Dartford warhorse Tony Pamphlet, his most famous saying that I pass on to the players every week is..." Good habits never let you down!! "

Please come and watch us when you can, the players would really appreciate your support.

Henno

24.9.2007

A week is a long time in football, as most people know, and for the reserves it was no different. After our unforgivable second half collapse at Chatham the previous Tuesday, we followed that result by beating Erith and Belvedere away 3- 0 on the Saturday, as I previously reported in last weeks notes, and then last Tuesday evening we comprehensively beat Herne Bay 4- 0 at home. The performance of the team that night was simply outstanding and I don't say that lightly. We played at such a pace and tempo with fast accurate two touch passing that the opposition could not live with us and in the end it could have been 7 or 8 as we hit the bar twice and their keeper made last ditch saves. Their manager shook my hand at the end and said that he felt that was the best performance he had seen from a reserve team and their players came up to me full of compliments also which was nice to hear.

We travel today in a strange twist of fate back to Chatham for a league game, as the previous game was in the floodlit trophy, giving us an ideal opportunity to put things straight and hopefully maintain our 100% start to the league programme. The team will be a lot different to the one put out two weeks ago as there were several changes that evening to accommodate first team players, which will happen in the mid week games this season, and I know the players are looking forward to it.

As always, if you are able to come and watch the team at any of our games your support would be very welcome.

Henno

17.9.2007

In my previous notes I said after our two straight wins, "I hope the wheels don't come off against Chatham," well, unless I had been there to see it for myself I would never have believed the result. Winning 4-1 in the 44<sup>th</sup> minute you would expect to win the game, however, we conceded a goal seconds before half time which gave Chatham hope, and then conceded again five minutes into the second half with Chatham going on to deservedly win 5-4. We lost our shape, gave the ball away in dangerous areas time and time again, and I agree completely with one comment on the Forum which said it was "painful to watch!", I know how he felt!! In defense of the team selected there were five changes from the team that had won 3-0 on the previous Saturday, one player that I had to leave out to accommodate a first team player had scored two goals against Herne Bay, and three of those changes were in the back four which showed.

However, the most important thing was to get a reaction from the players, not to feel sorry for ourselves and to put things right against Erith and Belvedere last Saturday which we did by winning 3-0 away from home. Only four players started on Saturday who had played against Chatham and I think one or two were keen to show me I had been wrong to leave them out which was a great attitude to have.

Therefore in our first four games I am pleased to show a record of three wins and one mad forty five minutes when we scored four away goals and lost!

Hope to see you at our next game and I can promise you one thing, it won't be dull !!

Henno

9.9.2007

I am absolutely delighted with the start the reserve team has made to the season with two straight wins, away to Ramsgate in the league and then home to Herne Bay in the Kent Intermediate Cup. We would have played Chatham during the week so hopefully the wheels did not come off. Although the results have been excellent, it is the manner in which we have won both games that has pleased me the most. Within the team there are players with so much ability and skill that we simply passed both opposing teams off the pitch, and but for better finishing in the final third we could have doubled the five goals scored to date. Both opposition managers have been very complimentary of Dartford and said how impressed they were with the style of football we have played which was nice to hear.

Although it is very early days, I have instilled into the players a desire to try and win every game we play, to try and win every competition entered, and if they continue to perform and results go well, the opportunity to play first team football will come, but such is the competition for places within the squad they know they have keep playing at the current high standard just to stay in my team, which is great for a manager to have!

A lot of hard work has gone into putting this squad together during the summer, and as a result, I really believe that the players assembled can push on and challenge for trophy's and more importantly, first team places.

We are at home this Tuesday night to Herne Bay in the floodlit Trophy and it would be great to see you there cheering us on.

Henno

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