

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November – Kent Youth League Central Division Weather:- Light rain.  
Dartford FC U18s 1 Tonbridge Angels 0

This was a return fixture of our first league game of the season, when we beat Tonbridge 4-1. This is such a competitive league that no-one was banking on another 4-1 victory and we expected a much tougher game this time round – and we weren't disappointed!! Tonbridge have added some players to their squad and today they played a very good game, as you would expect from a club of their stature. Dartford were a little under par in the first half, but still managed to create chances albeit half-chances due to good defending and goal keeping from the visitors. In the Dartford goal, Adam had little to do, but what he did do he did well and to be fair, Dartford worked hard but maybe not smart enough and frustrations seem to come to the fore and maybe this distracted from the home teams game-plan. Tonbridge defended very stubbornly and were very quick to close down and get their tackles in and for only the second time this season, we went in at half-time level 0-0. This is something that this Dartford side have to get used to, and the saying goes that you can't win a game in the first half but you can lose one, needs to be borne in mind. We're currently top of the league and we are there to be shot at. This is something we have to learn to deal with.

*Half-time score 0-0.*

*Half-time couldn't come quick enough and it was needed to calm down some of the home side whose frustrations were close to getting the better of them. For the first time this season, I had to calm the players down and I pointed out to them that this is a team game and that any bickering and in-fighting on our part was only going to give our opponents a lift.*

The side took to the field in the second half with a new sense of togetherness and determination. The second half was a much better performance and we started to dominate, particularly down the wide areas through Lewis Sutherland and Danny Nash. We still had to defend well and the back three of Issuree, Eyers and Ayoola were working hard to ensure that we didn't give anything away cheaply. After the hour mark, 3 changes were made with Callum Nye and Frazer Bent being replaced by James Jordan and Connor Heffernan and five minutes later, Karl Dent replaced Danny Nash. These changes tipped the game in Dartford's favour and the home side took the lead with 15 minutes remaining when Danny Crouch juggled the ball before lobbing it over the goal keeper from 20 yards. Further chances came for James Jordan, but the stubborn visiting defence held firm. Tonbridge also had their chances but we defended just that little bit better which ensured that Adam kept his 2<sup>nd</sup> clean sheet at home in the league, meaning that we've yet to concede a home goal this season.

The Tonbridge side that turned up today played much, much better than in the previous fixture and I'm sure that they are going to take points off many good sides. To be honest we didn't play well today, but we played well enough to secure the win. It's easy to forget just how young these lads are when you've been involved with them for a couple of years or more and you see what standard of football they are capable of producing. But they have to learn that we play as a team, we win as a team, draw as a team or lose as a team. The difference between a good side and an excellent side is how you perform in close games and today we came out on top in a close, tough, competitive game. The team did well to get 3 points and we now move onto VCD away in the league next week. We are looking forward to playing at their place as they appear to have a great set-up. I hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Team:- Molloy, Issuree, Ayoola, Eyers, White, Heather ©, Nash (Dent 65), Crouch, Nye (Jordan 60), Bent (Heffernan 60), Sutherland  
Goal:- Crouch

Joint MOTM



Ashley Issuree – Great defending



Lewis Sutherland – constant supply of crosses from the left