

Plantation 0 Comberton 2

21st January 2012

Attendance 41 (plus 6 dogs)

Scorers; OG, Harvey Agg

Following last week's unceremonious 'text' sacking of Neil Warnock by QPR and Caterham F1 boss Tony Fernandes, Steve was clearly nervous of the consequences of poor performance following the multi-million pound jacket sponsorship deal with Caterham. Thankfully his inbox was empty this morning, save for a reminder from Tesco for his grocery delivery this afternoon, and so the Orange army's leader was there in his familiar white shorts to prepare the boys for this crucial cup tie.

Within seconds of kick off, the swirling wind assisted a long range shot from Plantation which hit Harvey's closely guarded post. This was followed by unrelenting pressure from the home teams' attack as both teams adjusted to the conditions and the January winds. As Comberton settled into their game plan Joe broke free to test the Plantation defense for the first time with a well struck lob just clearing the crossbar. The home team was quick to respond and a well placed shot from their striker was narrowly cut out by James P.

As the inevitable gritty midfield battle commenced the home side broke free again and caught Harvey off his line. Plantation seized the opportunity but their shot was cleared off the line by Joe to prevent the home side from opening the scoring.

The narrow escape sparked a renewed level of determination from the visitors and some good one touch link up play between Teddy and James P created Comberton's closest chance in the half so far. Tactical changes from Steve brought Isaak and Thomas into the picture and immediately Thomas and Teddy linked up to create two further goal scoring chances. Strong defense from Isaak and Daniel averted further chances from the home side before Jo released Thomas down the right side of the park. A clever lay off by Thomas to James P was reciprocated by a pin-point cross which Thomas smashed only centimeters wide.

With only seconds to go before the halftime whistle a hard battled ruck just outside the Plantation box sent the ball high through the air and over the home side's keeper into the back of the net. The boys were clearly thankful to finish the first half a goal to the better knowing that this game was by no means over yet.

During half time, strategies were anxiously debated as the boys prepared for what undoubtedly would be a very difficult second half. As the match restarted Comberton seemed all at sea as Plantation commanded the midfield. Three minutes into the second period Steve noticed that we were one player short which explained the lack of control in the centre of the park. With the mistake rectified (and Steve wondering whether a Fernandes text would now follow) Comberton got straight back into their groove.

Tenacious play from Nick and Teddy in the centre of the pitch kept the home side out of the danger area for most of the middle period of the game. Even when Plantation were able to break through Comberton's brawny defense their shots were met with the safe hands of James P.

With only a narrow margin between the two sides, nerves were clearly being tested as Steve's shouts to pick up the loose attackers were barely audible through the pounding wind. With 5 minutes to go an inch perfect through ball from Teddy found Harvey deep into the Plantation half. A first time strike sent the ball between keeper and post as Harvey doubled Comberton's score and created a much needed buffer.

With the safety of a two goal lead in place, Comberton settled a more relaxed style of play and with seconds to go James E broke free with only the keeper to beat. A firm strike just over the crossbar was the last attack of the game and after a tough but resilient performance by the boys the final whistle went signaling Comberton's progression to the next stage of their cup campaign.

Steve's post match congratulations were thoroughly warranted, although his suggestion that we could even play and win without a goal keeper was met with furrowed brows from Comberton's loyal band of supporters. Either way, the boy's left the field better for knowing that their hard work and determination had paid off whilst Steve can rest easy that a text from Fernandes is unlikely....for now!!

Player of the week

Daniel Bates