

Comberton Crusaders 3 – 3 Newmarket Town

18 Feb 2012

With temperatures soaring into double figures conditions had improved enough for Comberton to entertain Newmarket Town at Barton Rec on Saturday. The Comberton squad was depleted through injury and half-term holidays and a squally wind blew across the pitch just to add to the difficulty.

In the opening minutes Newmarket were the better side as they adapted well to the conditions. They closed down very quickly and made it difficult for Comberton to get any composure or rhythm. Despite that they did get forward and Ciaran Coyle struck a ferocious shot from just outside the box that smashed off the bar and away to safety.

From the kick-out Newmarket moved the ball swiftly down the pitch and won a throw-in on the left side. They took it quickly and lofted a hopeful ball towards goal. The wind played its part and the ball dropped in at the top corner of the net to put Newmarket ahead. Within a minute they had gone 2-0 up with the Comberton defence once more in disarray. Centre back George suffered a head injury in the process and was replaced by Alfie Ward.

Comberton didn't panic and continued to play their passing game. Tom Dawes and Felix Serby combined close to the Newmarket penalty area to allow Tom to pull one back for Crusaders. The goal seemed to spark Comberton into life and the balance began to tip in their favour as the half came to a close. Tom shot just narrowly over the bar and Alfie had a shot that went just wide. Comberton were awarded a free kick on the edge of the box when Aaron Biggs was brought down. Tom stepped up to take the kick but he placed it just wide of the post. At the break Newmarket were ahead 2-1

In the second half Comberton had more of the possession and were slightly more secure at the back but to be fair their normally safe control still eluded them. Two minutes in and George Taylor intercepted a corner and passed the ball smartly out of defence to the already flying Felix Serby. The mercurial winger raced up the touchline followed by the Newmarket defenders. Just as it looked like he would be caught Felix switched on the after-burners and pulled away. As he neared the goal he shot across the keeper and into the left corner to draw the scores level at 2-2. It was a brilliant goal and something the supporters would love to see more of from Felix this season.

Both teams continued to search for a winner but Comberton looked the more likely to score. George and Felix went close but the excellent Newmarket keeper made two reaction saves in quick succession to deny the third goal. Newmarket had chances too and they were only denied by some great goalkeeping from Harry Newman.

With five minutes to go Newmarket pushed deep into Comberton territory and with defenders jumping in to try to stop the oncoming striker it wasn't long before he had a clear sight of goal. The shot was blistering and arrowed into the left corner giving Harry Newman no chance. It looked to be the winner. In a desperate bid to salvage something from the game Comberton pushed Matthew Coyle up front alongside Ciaran. Once again George cleared from defence and found Tom. He released it to Ciaran on the right who looked to only need to square it to give Matthew a tap-in but the defender and the oncoming keeper closed the door and the ball was smothered out for a corner.

Matthew blasted the corner across goal and with just a hint of wind assistance it crept over the line despite the keeper's best efforts. The linesman confirmed it had crossed the line and Comberton had salvaged a draw right at the end of the match.

Despite some sloppy play in the first half this was a very good performance by Comberton when you consider the missing key players. Newmarket also played some great football and deserved the point.

Squad: Harry Newman, James Mikelson, Aaron Biggs, Matthew Coyle, Ciaran Coyle, Alfie Ward, Owen Coyle, Felix Serby, Tom Dawes, George Taylor

Player of the week: George Taylor

Referee: Eleanor Sims