

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD 2 DARTFORD 3

Dartford returned to National League South action fresh after hammering CockFosters 9-0 in the London Senior Cup in mid-week, and they followed that result with a Tyrique Hyde-inspired 3-2 victory against an in-form Hemel Hempstead Town at Vauxhall Road.

Despite the fact that The Tudors have just one league defeat in the previous seven games, they have yet to register a victory on their own patch. Registering just three points (3 draws) in six appearances at Vauxhall Road, as they struggle to adapt to a new 3G pitch, the form-guide suggested a tough game for the Darts who have lost their previous two games on the road by a single goal. Yet, that 9-0 win in mid-week surely sparked some confidence back into the Dartford attack.

The visitors made a lively start before taking the lead in the tenth minute. A terrific attack from the Dartford engine room released Emmanuel Sonupe on the right-flank, who broke into the host's box and pulled the trigger. His strike was saved by Nick Hayes, but the goalkeeper didn't keep the ball safe, and there was Tyrique Hyde to follow up and score on his return to Vauxhall Road after spending time on loan with The Tudors recently.

However, the hosts were full of confidence as well, and they started probing for an equaliser almost immediately. And by the twentieth minute they were level. After Jacques Maghoma won the ball and drove his team forward, he intelligently released Alfie Cerulli, who took the opportunity well to slot the ball beyond Dan Wilks. The goal-scorer was then alert at the other end to clear a Dartford effort off the line within minutes.

By this point it was end-to-end football, as both sides created opportunities throughout the remainder of the half. Emmanuel Sonupe came close in the 26th minute, but he ran out of room after driving forward and getting around goalkeeper Hayes. After a lengthy stoppage for Craig Fasanmade to receive treatment soon after, Wilks was then called into action to make a brilliant save from Cerulli to keep the score level (36).

Meanwhile, the visitors continued to press forward and could have taken the lead deep into stoppage time when Jernade Meade and Emmanuel Sonupe combined well to lead an attack. Upon breaking into the box, the latter struck the ball well, but Hayes was equally alert to make the save.

The second forty-five saw Steve King's men get a firmer grip on proceedings, as they pressed Hemel Hempstead back into their own half. Another scintillating attack involving Meade and Hyde saw the latter release Luke Wanadio, who danced around Daniel Wishart before forcing Hayes into a superb save (49).

Six minutes later saw the Darts' efforts rewarded with a penalty kick. As another attack came down the right-flank, Wanadio's dangerous cross struck a defender's arm, and the referee gave the penalty. Up stepped Ade Azeez to bury the ball into the back of the net and restore his side's lead.

With 58 minutes on the clock, the impressive Sonupe had to leave the pitch with an injury. He was replaced by Jake Robinson, who made his presence known almost immediately and drew a foul from

Cole Kpekawa, who received a yellow card for the challenge (63). Noor Husin then came close with a rebound (after his initial ball into the box ended back under his feet), only to see it sail over Hayes' crossbar (66).

Dartford came close again two minutes later when Tom Bonner's wonderful long-range, over-the-top pass found both Azeez and Hyde rushing into the box with a defender in close proximity. Unfortunately, said defender got a boot to it first to punt the ball behind for a corner (68).

Tyrique Hyde then took centre stage with a great solo effort in the 76th minute to put the game out of the host's reach. He broke into the box in time to receive the ball, took a touch, and buried it beyond Hayes to ensure his team took the three points back to Dartford and end a five-game winless run in the league.

Luke Wanadio took matters into his own hands twice in quick succession to prevent the hosts from getting back into the game. His wonderfully timed challenge in the 85th minute prevented Samir Carruthers from taking a shot on, before his perfect intervention and clearance thwarted another Tudor attack seconds later.

Steve King brought on George Porter for Ade Azeez as the game entered stoppage time, before Hemel pulled a goal back sixty seconds later through another Alfie Cerulli strike. However, it wasn't enough as the Darts earned an eventual narrow, yet thoroughly deserved victory on the road.

TEAMS

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD: Nick Hayes, Gus Scott-Morriss, Daniel Wishart, Toby Stephens, Aaron Simpson, Cole Kpekawa, Jacques Maghoma, Sam Mantom ©, Alfie Cerulli, Craig Fasanmade, Joash Nembhard.

SUBSTITUTES: Josh Castiglione, Freddie Hinds, Samir Carruthers, Ethan Holt.

DARTFORD: Dan Wilks, Jernade Meade, Connor Essam, Ronnie Vint, Tom Bonner ©, Noor Husin, Kieran Murtagh, Emmanuel Sonupe, Tyrique Hyde, Ade Azeez, Luke Wanadio.

SUBSTITUTES: Jake Robinson, George Porter, Dan Roberts, Danny Leonard, D'Sean Theobalds.

By Chris Palmer