

DARTFORD 6 WHITSTABLE TOWN 1

Jake Robinson bagged a hatrick, and goals from Danny Leonard, George Porter, and Tyrique Hyde helped Dartford to a comprehensive victory over Whitstable Town FC in the delayed 2019/20 Kent Senior Cup Final.

Played under the floodlights at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park on a freezing cold night, the game saw the Darts in no mood for generosity, as they ruthlessly destroyed their opponents from the Isthmian League South East Division in front of approximately 770 supporters during an explosive first-half display.

Dartford raced out of the blocks and carved through the Whitstable defence within two minutes, as the superb Danny Leonard tormented left-back Jake Mackenzie. He set-up Tyrique Hyde with an inch-perfect ball, only to see a defender block the latter's strike. The resulting corner was whipped in, whereby Kieran Murtagh saw his powerful header cannon back off of the crossbar. The loose ball rebounded to Danny Leonard on the edge of the box, who fired it into the bottom corner to give the hosts a third minute lead amid the sounds of jubilation from the home faithful.

The Darts were absolutely rampant and threatened to overwhelm the Oystermen, as they couldn't cope with the attacking force of Leonard, Porter, and Robinson. All three would come close during the next fifteen minutes, the best of which was Robinson's cheeky lob over goalkeeper Daniel Eason in the nineteenth minute, only for the ball to land over the wrong side of the crossbar.

The hosts needn't have been concerned about the miss though because, they had doubled their lead by the 23rd minute. It was Leonard's dangerous run which caused chaos once again, and his lovely cross into the box towards Hyde forced a defender to commit the foul. A penalty was awarded by referee, Mr Simon Finnigan, and Jake Robinson duly drilled the ball beyond the hapless Eason.

Having been beaten twice, Eason then kept his side in the contest by making saves to prevent Ronnie Vint (25), George Porter (27), and Tyrique Hyde (31) from scoring. The latter, in particular, was a superb save to say the least! However, the goalkeeper couldn't do anything to prevent Robinson from latching onto Hyde's effort which was heading wide of the upright in the 36th minute. The striker was in the perfect position to tap the wayward ball home to seal his second goal of the night.

The Dartford number nine then had another effort wiped out for straying offside, before George Porter stepped up to flick the ball home with his head from an excellent delivery in the 40th minute. Tyrique Hyde then wrapped up the first-half with a cool finish on the stroke of half-time, as the hosts left the field in full control of the tie.

The second-half saw manager Steve King forced into his first substitution, as Ronnie Vint was unable to continue. Connor Essam was the man to replace him in the defence alongside captain Tom Bonner, Michael Kedman, and Josh Clarke. And within four minutes, the latter came close to adding a sixth for the Darts when he got on the end of Danny Leonard's through-ball. Unfortunately, Clarke's effort was easily gathered by Daniel Eason.

Dartford did indeed make it six just five minutes after that, when Jake Robinson collected the ball before running brilliantly into the box and capping the move off with an excellent finish into the bottom corner (54).

The goal seemed to light a spark in the visitors who, until now, had offered very little in attack. Keith McMahon's side began to claw their way back into proceedings a little, as they set about trying to make a game of it, with Alexander Gaggin proving to be a little troublesome at times. And they were rewarded for their efforts after being awarded a free-kick in a dangerous position in the 59th minute. Daniel Walder took it, and sent a beautiful curling effort beyond Dan Wilks and into the back of the net!

The Oystermen were then presented with another free-kick in a dangerous position on their left side of the pitch merely seconds later. But, Wilks was equal to it this time, getting down to save Walder's kick confidently.

Things were pretty even during this period of the game, as a lot of football was played in the middle. Steve King introduced Dan Roberts for George Porter on 62 minutes, before Noor Husin replaced Tyrique Hyde on 68. And, it was Roberts who was the next Dartford player to come close to adding to the scoresheet. As Wilks and Leonard combined to hit the visitors on the counter-attack, the latter found Roberts with a delightful ball, but Roberts' effort sailed narrowly wide of Eason's upright (72).

The super sub was clean through seven minutes later after he'd gotten on the end of a deliciously long pass, but he was adjudged to have been offside. He then continued threatening to run riot and forced good saves from Eason in the 81st and 83rd minutes, before the Man of The Match, Jake Robinson, did put the ball in the back of the net on 84 minutes... only to have it chalked off for offside! Robinson won't be too disappointed though, after all, his excellent performance earned him the aforementioned Man of The Match and the match ball.

So, a dominant performance saw Dartford victorious in the Kent Senior Cup Final! Celebrations will surely be going on throughout the night, as the players, staff, and fans rejoice at having won their first trophy of the season.

TEAMS

DARTFORD: Dan Wilks, Josh Clarke, Michael Kedman, D'Sean Theobalds, Ronnie Vint, Tom Bonner ©, Danny Leonard, Kieran Murtagh, Jake Robinson, George Porter, Tyrique Hyde.

SUBSTITUTES: Noor Husin, Ade Azeez, Dan Roberts, Connor Essam, Luke Wanadio.

WHITSTABLE TOWN: Daniel Eason, Gus Barnes, Jake MacKenzie, Daniel Walder, William Thomas, Thomas Mills, Alexander Gaggin, Luke Illsey, Kemo Darboe, Thomas Carlton, Mohammad Cham.

SUBSTITUTES: James Brown, Harry Goodger, Victor Aiyelabola, George McIlroy, Rodney Erutor.

By Chris Palmer