CRAY WANDERERS 1 DARTFORD 3

Dartford travelled to Hayes Lane, Bromley, where they faced the oldest team in English football in the third round of the Buildbase FA Trophy on the teams' last competitive game before Christmas.

Determined to put last weekend's defeat at Maidstone behind them, the Darts began the game slowly, yet exploded into life with three goals in a six-minute blitz after weathering a decent start by the hosts.

The opening goal arrived in the 24th minute, after a beautiful long ball set up Jake Robinson inside the Wanderers box. His initial shot was saved by goalkeeper and former Dart, Bailey Vose, but Cray failed to clear and Tyrique Hyde picked up the loose ball. He passed it straight back into the danger area, and Robinson couldn't miss from close range.

The goal lifted the visitors measurably and they doubled their lead three minutes later, as a shell-shocked Wanderers threatened to implode. Another wonderful piece of play set up Hyde in the box, only for a wandering Wanderer to bring him down. The referee, Mr Steven Hughes, awarded the penalty and Robinson stepped up to double his side's lead with his tenth goal of the season.

With a two-goal cushion, the visitors still weren't finished, and another error was forced by Steve King's men before they pressed forward once more. This time the ball was fed straight into Danny Leonard's path, and he had only one thing on his mind, as he stroked the ball home in the 30th minute.

That six-minute spell summed up Dartford's explosive attack, as the players put on an excellent display to show what they're capable of when firing on all cylinders. Before that, however, Wanderers could be forgiven for dreaming of what might have been. And, had Danny Kedwell's men been more accurate, they could have opened the scoring earlier.

As early as the fourth minute, Cray Wanderers were putting Dartford under a little pressure when Kyel Reid broke through on the right-flank. His excellent cross found Fjord Rogers, who watched in dismay as his effort clipped the top of Dan Wilks' crossbar.

Jamie Yila also came close, but saw his 21st minute drive blocked well by Ronnie Vint, before Jai Reason set up Reid, but the latter's effort sailed wide of Wilks' upright (23).

The second-half was a closer encounter, as the Darts seemed to be satisfied with soaking up the pressure while counter-attacking without putting themselves at risk. And, they came close with one of those attacks when Michael Kedman raced along the left-flank and sent in a delicious cross for Robinson. The latter connected, but he sliced the ball wide of Bailey Vose's post (52).

The hosts then came close themselves nine minutes later, when Yila got on the end of a good cross from Sam Skeffington, but his header failed to trouble Wilks. The Dartford goalkeeper did make a good save on 63 minutes to thwart Reason's 25-yard effort, which came straight after an effort at the other end - a quick shot from Emmanuel Sonupe forcing a save out of Vose.

Steve King decided to make all three substitutions in quick succession, as he shuffled his squad a little. George Porter and Kieran Murtagh replaced Jake Robinson and Tyrique Hyde (67), before Dan Roberts came on for Emmanuel Sonupe (70).

As the game reached the 75th minute, the hosts managed to pull a goal back after Dartford failed to clear their lines. A Bailey Vose kick found Jamie Yila who, in turn found Jai Reason in enough space to pull the trigger and get himself on the scoresheet.

The visitors responded and were unlucky not to restore their 3-goal advantage with ten minutes remaining. As the Isthmian Premier League side pressed forward, Dartford hit them with a delightful counter-attack. Dan Roberts started the move with a terrific run down the left-flank, before squaring the ball to Danny Leonard. Leonard returned the favour with a neat flick, but Roberts couldn't quite keep his close-range header down, and the hosts breathed a sigh of relief.

There would be one more opportunity for the Darts, as Roberts drove into the box, only to see his strike saved by Vose (87). Not that it mattered, though, as a composed performance and a breathtaking six-minute spell was enough to see Dartford go through to the next round of the Buildbase FA Trophy.

TEAMS

CRAY WANDERERS: Bailey Vose, Kasim Aidoo, Jack Hanson, Dean Beckwith ©, Marvin McCoy, Andy Drury, Fjord Rogers, Jamie Yila, Jai Reason, Kyel Reid, Sam Skeffington.
SUBSTITUTES: Erald Desa, Danny Kedwell, Eniola Hassan, Silas Donkor, Daniel Mountain.

DARTFORD: Dan Wilks, Josh Clarke, Jordan Wynter, Ronnie Vint, Michael Kedman, Noor Husin ©, Jack Jebb, Tyrique Hyde, Danny Leonard, Jake Robinson, Emmanuel Sonupe.
SUBSTITUTES: Dan Roberts, Kieran Murtagh, George Porter, D'Sean Theobalds, Sam Odaudu.

By Chris Palmer