

DARTFORD 1 EBBSFLEET UNITED 0

A gallant defensive display and a first-half strike from Jake Robinson ensured victory for Dartford in the North Kent Derby, as 2,457 fans blew the roof off of Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park.

Having come away from Tonbridge Angels with all three points at the weekend, the confidence in the Dartford players was clear for all to see during an electric first-half of this rescheduled fixture, as they were fired up by an absolutely deafening avalanche of support from the home faithful.

The tempo on the pitch from both sets of players set pulses racing across all four corners of this marvellous stadium, simply because local bragging rights were at stake. Yet, the decibel levels increased further when debutant, Marcus Dinanga broke through the Ebbsfleet backline before pulling the trigger with a powerful left-footed strike in the 14th minute. Unfortunately, the 24-year old striker on loan from Altrincham until the end of the season, could only watch as goalkeeper Chris Haigh saved his effort.

This was breath-taking stuff from both sides and, six minutes later it was the visitors' turn, as Dan Wilks was called into action to save a Lee Martin effort. But, then the moment of the match! A seemingly harmless high ball was intercepted by the hosts with some determined pressing, before being fed out to Kai Woollard-Innocent. The left-back then delivered an inviting ball into the danger area, whereby the lurking Jack Robinson pounced to slot the ball home (21). Mass delirium ensued, as the Dartford faithful celebrated to the fullest as Jake lapped up the applause at having given his side the lead with his fifteenth goal of the season (in all competitions).

The visitors were stunned and had no immediate answer on how to respond and, in fact, deserved to be 2-0 down if lady luck had shined on Robinson as we reached the 27th minute. The build up was beautiful, as Kieran Murtagh played a delightful ball across the field into the path of Danny Leonard. He received it graciously and raced beyond Joe Martin, as the crowd rose to their feet in anticipation. The cross was delicious, but Robinson was unlucky that his connection sent the ball the wrong side of Haigh's upright.

Ebbsfleet were then able to calm themselves down and began to probe for an equaliser. Ben Chapman was the first, but his 31st minute effort was blocked excellently by the Dartford defensive wall. Craig Tanner then invited former Dart, Elliott Romain, to come forward with a teasing cross, but Dan Wilks read it well and collected comfortably (37), before Tom Bonner's defence did its job again with another good block from a Christian N'Guessan effort (39).

The second-half would prove to be one of the best defensive performances from Dartford, as they held an Ebbsfleet onslaught at bay while being spurred on by the fans who, incidentally, had not stopped singing from the first until the last minute!

Seemingly unhappy with his side's first-half performance, the Ebbsfleet gaffer brought on top-scorer Dominic Poleon to replace Elliott Romain immediately. The move almost paid off in the 50th minute when Tobi Adebayo-Rowling got past Kai Woollard-Innocent to send in a dangerous cross, only for Poleon to head the ball just wide of Wilks' post.

The hosts just couldn't get hold of the ball during this period and, yet, were solid at the back as Tom Bonner and Korey Roberts kept everything organised. Manager Steve King brought on reinforcements in the shape of D'Sean Theobalds for Kieran Murtagh (68), George Porter for Jake Robinson (78), and Dan Roberts for Danny Leonard (82).

Despite their efforts, however, Ebbsfleet failed to trouble Dan Wilks, in fact, it was the hosts who came closest during the latter stages when Luke Allen sent a long-range drive high and wide of Haigh's crossbar in the 84th minute. And, having ridden the earlier storm, the Darts saw out the remaining minutes to secure the three points in a game which saw defender Korey Roberts earn the Man of The Match award on his home debut.

As the celebrations continue into the night, Dartford can be proud of a mighty performance, which sees them leapfrog their rivals into third place in the National League South table. Meanwhile, special applause goes out to the Dartford supporters on an evening in which they didn't stop singing. They were the twelfth man tonight, as they helped the Darts get over the finish line.

TEAMS

DARTFORD: Dan Wilks, Jordan Wynter, Kai Woollard-Innocent, Luke Allen, Korey Roberts, Tom Bonner ©, Danny Leonard, Kieran Murtagh, Jake Robinson, Marcus Dinanga, Jack Jebb.

SUBSTITUTES: Tyrique Hyde, D'Sean Theobalds, George Porter, Dan Roberts, Calvin Kalala.

EBBSFLEET UNITED: Chris Haigh, Tobi Adebayo-Rowling, Joe Martin, Ben Chapman, Christian N'Guessan, Alfie Egan, Craig Tanner, Greg Cundle, Lee Martin, Chris Solly, Elliott Romain.

SUBSTITUTES: Harrison Firth, Will Wood, Dominic Poleon, Monlouis Kirean, Jack Paxman.

By Chris Palmer