

## **HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE 0 DARTFORD 1**

A Luke Allen strike on the brink of half-time was enough to send Dartford into third in the National League South table, as they returned from Hampshire with a fourth win on the spin.

The Darts started the brighter of the two sides under the floodlights of the Draper Tools Community Stadium, having forced two corners within the opening four minutes. Yet, it was Calvin Kalala who created the first meaningful opportunity, when he turned three defenders inside-out in open-play before sending in a neat cross. Unfortunately, goalkeeper Ross Worner was alert to the danger and gathered the ball comfortably (5).

A good attacking move by the Hawks was almost rewarded when Jake McCarthy got onto the end of a dangerous cross with a free header in the eighth minute, but the Dartford defence stepped in to clear the danger. Two minutes later saw Kalala put the ball into the back of the Havant net, only to be flagged offside.

With Kalala looking dangerous on one flank, new boy Ody Alfa was making his presence felt on the other, none more so than in the 14th minute. The 22-year old winger on loan from QPR absolutely obliterated four Hawks, as he raced down the wing before cutting inside and pulling the trigger. Unfortunately, his strike was blocked and Luke Allen collected the loose ball, but failed to hit the target.

The Dartford number four would then seek out Kalala with a delightful ball in the 24th minute, but the latter's strike was saved by Worner, before Alfa was at it again seconds later only to be fouled. The referee, Mr Ritchie Watkins, awarded the free-kick and up stepped Jack Jebb. His effort was on target, but Worner was able to make a routine save.

Meanwhile, the hosts took a little time to get going, as just two wins from 11 home games testifies to their stuttering form. It took until the 37th minute for Paul Doswell's side to register a meaningful effort on the Dartford goal, which came courtesy of Alfie Whittingham who set-up Billy Clifford. However, the Dartford defence stood firm to block the strike, as Kory Roberts, Connor Essam, Jordan Wynter, and Kai Woollard-Innocent protected Dan Wilks effectively.

Then just as the game threatened to become a little stretched, Dartford pounced on the stroke of half-time. The move was exhilarating to watch, as Ody Alfa, Calvin Kalala, Marcus Dinanga, and Jack Jebb all combined with excellent passing to carve open the Hawks' defence. Jebb delivered the final ball, which landed into the path of Luke Allen, who cut inside before firing a powerful drive beyond Worner (45).

The visitors had good opportunities to double their lead early in the second-half, but Worner saved Dinanga's strike from the edge of his box (50), before Alfa received a peach of a pass from captain Kieran Murtagh a minute later, only to shoot over Worner's crossbar with a powerful left-footed curling drive (51).

Of course, there was the obligatory penalty appeal which occurred during a Dartford attack with Kalala. But Mr Watkins wasn't interested (57), before a 64th minute attack by the hosts saw them look odds-on to equalise. Yet, the brilliance of a Kory Roberts clearance kept the Darts' lead intact.

Manager Steve King used all his options within five minutes, as George Porter replaced Ody Alfa (65), Ade Azeez replaced Marcus Dinanga (68), and Tom Bonner replaced Calvin Kalala (70).

Azeez would go on to put the ball in the back of the net a few minutes later, only to have been adjudged to have been offside. Meanwhile, at the other end, Alfie Whittingham saw his 80th minute strike fly by the wrong side of Dan Wilks' upright.

The Hawks' frustrations boiled over during the final minute, as tempers flared in Paul Doswell's dugout. In amongst the melee was Ade Azeez, who was shown a yellow card along with Tommy Wright and Jamie Collins.

And so, another disciplined performance from the Darts saw them make the long journey back to Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park confident with having now won a fourth consecutive game. The result sees Steve King's side close the gap to top spot to just four points, as the competition prepares for an interesting battle ahead.

## **TEAMS**

**HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE:** Ross Worner, Josh Passley, Joe Oastler ©, Jake McCarthy, Billy Clifford, Joe Newton, Jamie Collins, Tommy Wright, Manny Duku, Alfie Whittingham, Stefan Payne.

**SUBSTITUTES:** Alex Wall, Benny Read, Charlie Searle, Oscar Gobem, Scott Rendell.

**DARTFORD:** Dan Wilks, Jordan Wynter, Kai Woollard-Innocent, Luke Allen, Kory Roberts, Connor Essam, Calvin Kalala, Kieran Murtagh ©, Marcus Dinanga, Ody Alfa, Jack Jebb.

**SUBSTITUTES:** Tom Bonner, Ade Azeez, Jake Robinson, Tyrique Hyde, George Porter.

**By Chris Palmer**