

DARTFORD 2 CHELMSFORD 1

Midfielder Jack Jebb was involved in both goals, as Dartford saw off a determined Chelmsford City, to stretch their unbeaten league run at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park to an impressive fifteen games.

As 950 supporters prepared for another ninety minutes under the floodlights, us hacks in the press area were almost joined by one of God's smaller creations, as a wee mouse came scurrying out from the stand to our right and headed towards the Dartford dugout! The little fella was obviously frightened, but was perhaps looking for manager Steve King, who was back in his rightful place after missing the weekend's game due to having surgery - welcome home Steve King.

The referee, Mr Steven Hughes got things underway, and it was immediately evident that another good game was upon us. The omens proved to be true after both sides had created meaningful opportunities within the first five minutes. The Clarets began well and were unfortunate when Adebola Oluwo couldn't direct his free header towards the target (2). That was swiftly followed by an attack at the other end where Ade Azeez was equally as guilty of a similar miss, having gotten on the end of Calvin Kalala's dangerous cross (3).

It wasn't long before the first controversial moment of the game either. That came in the fifth minute, after Danny Leonard received the ball just outside the Chelmsford box, only to be ganged up on by both Christian Frimpong and Tom Dickens. And yet, despite the Dartford player being obviously impeded and injured, Mr Hughes awarded nothing!

Five minutes later saw George Porter fouled by Clarets captain Cameron James, who became the first player to be booked for his efforts. Another foul was then committed a few minutes later and Dartford were awarded a free-kick in a dangerous position. Up stepped midfield maestro Jack Jebb to send a spectacular set-piece beyond goalkeeper James Dillon to open the scoring (17).

As the hosts roamed forward once again, Christian Frimpong brought down Tyrique Hyde, and the Darts had another free-kick. Once again Jebb stepped up, only this time he floated the ball towards the far post, where Danny Leonard pounced to tap home his ninth goal of the season in all competitions (26).

The visitors responded with Frimpong the centre of attention once again, only on this occasion he had a pop at Dan Wilks' goal from distance. His 30th minute drive took a deflection and sailed narrowly over the top of Wilks' crossbar. The resulting corner then fell to Luke Deslandes, who failed to locate the target.

Tyrique Hyde then dummied Frimpong before sending a curling drive flying over Dillon's crossbar (33), before former Dart Charlie Sheringham pounced on an error by Connor Essam and forced Wilks into a good save in the 44th minute.

The opening exchanges of the second-half saw the visitors come out with all guns blazing, as they tried to find a way back into the game. They came close on 49 minutes via Luke Deslandes, who forced Wilks into another great save when Sheringham was ready to pounce on any loose ball.

Two minutes later saw the Clarets pull a goal back, after Deslandes had fed a neat ball into Tom Blackwell. He'd breached the Dartford defence and scored. Suddenly the hosts looked a little fragile. Yet, in the 53rd minute the game appeared to swing back into the Darts' favour. A counter-attack was launched, Eduino Vaz lunged late at George Porter, and the Chelmsford player was sent off by Mr Hughes.

Despite being a man down, the visitors continued to probe, and only a combination of Jack Jebb and Dan Wilks prevented Blackwell from grabbing the equaliser (57). Wilks was called into action once again two minutes later, as he leapt to tip Tom Dickens's dangerous cross behind to safety.

Both sides made use of the maximum substitutions allowed, with Dartford's being: Kieran Murtagh on for George Porter (57), Ody Alfa on for Calvin Kalala (61), and Jake Robinson replacing Ade Azeez deep into stoppage time. Chelmsford's changes involved Chez Isaac replacing Daniel Imray (63), Matthew Rush replacing Charlie Sheringham (72), and Tom Dickens was replaced by Freddie Hockey (86).

Returning back to the action, the Darts should have extended their lead in the 71st minute when a powerful run and drive from Danny Leonard forced Dillon to make a great save. The resulting corner then saw Jebb find Azeez in the box, but the striker fired just wide of Dillon's upright.

The hosts were purring once again and were awarded another free-kick in a dangerous position in the 77th minute. Jack Jebb beat the Chelmsford wall with ease, but his looping effort was prevented from dropping over the line by an alert Dillon. Ody Alfa was to set up Jebb late on, but the latter's strike was deflected agonisingly over the top of Dillon's crossbar (89), before Oluwo found Isaac with a deep cross, only for Wilks to save the substitute's header (90).

And, so the Darts extended their excellent home form with a hard-fought victory in an exciting game, whereby the Man of The Match award went to defender Kory Roberts. Yet, one has to wonder whatever happened to that mouse...?

TEAMS

DARTFORD: Dan Wilks, Kory Roberts, Jayden Sweeney, Tyrique Hyde, Connor Essam, Tom Bonner ©, Danny Leonard, Jack Jebb, George Porter, Calvin Kalala, Ade Azeez.

SUBSTITUTES: Jake Robinson, Ody Alfa, Kieran Murtagh, Marcus Dinanga, Jordan Greenidge.

CHELMSFORD: James Dillon, Cameron James ©, Tom Dickens, Christian Frimpong, Adebola Oluwo, Charlie Sheringham, Daniel Imray, Luke Deslandes, Zak Bradshaw, Eduino Vaz, Tom Blackwell.

SUBSTITUTES: Louis Dunne, Matthew Rush, Guy Norton, Chez Isaac, Freddie Hockey.

By Chris Palmer

