

BILLERICAY TOWN 0 DARTFORD 2

A goal a-piece for Jack Jebb and Marcus Dinanga was enough to secure a vital victory at Billericay Town, as Dartford guaranteed themselves a place in the National League South playoffs on a hot Good Friday afternoon.

To say this was a game of two halves is an understatement, as the hosts started the first forty-five well. And, within two minutes they'd registered the first attempt on target, after Henry Ochieng fired straight at Dan Wilks.

The Darts responded well, and came close themselves in the sixth minute when Jack Jebb found Kory Roberts in the Billericay box with a delicious cross. Unfortunately, Roberts couldn't keep his header down.

The New Lodge side reacted swiftly after nine minutes, but Anderson Pinto was restricted to taking a chance from distance, which flew over the top of Wilks' crossbar.

Winger, Calvin Kalala, had opportunities to show his abilities this afternoon, none more so than in the 23rd minute. Collecting the ball in his own half, he then powered forward with an excellent driving run. Playing a one-two with Jake Robinson, Kalala then fired a good effort at the Billericay goal, only for it to land safely in Zaki Oualah's grateful arms.

Six minutes later, a misjudgement by Kory Roberts almost resulted in an opening goal for the hosts. A long ball over-the-top towards Toby Stevenson bounced higher than Roberts expected, and Stevenson was able to find Jack Munns with a good pass. His effort was superbly blocked by Tom Bonner, before Josh Wright shot straight at Wilks.

Having restricted the hosts to shots from distance so far, Bonner and Co forced Henry Ochieng to do the same after 32 minutes. However, this attempt alluded everyone inside the box before smashing back off of Wilks' upright!

A frustrating first-half for the visitors continued when another Kalala run ended with him being fouled on the edge of the Billericay box (37). However, the referee (Mr Farai Hallam) wasn't interested in the slightest!

With seven additional minutes to play after the 45, the hosts were forced into an early change with Kreshnic Krasniqi having to be replaced by Femi Akinwande. And, at this point, the Darts gained control of the match. Unfortunately, neither Jack Jebb nor Marcus Dinanga could capitalise before the break.

Not that those opportunities were missed though... because Dartford burst out of the blocks, and were ahead within seconds of the restart. Straight from the kick-off, Robinson collected the ball, delivered it on a plate for Jebb, and he slotted it beyond Oualah.

Billericay were stunned, and Dartford set about putting their hosts to the proverbial sword. But, Oualah kept his team in the game with a good save from Kalala (50), before the tricky French winger played a brilliant one-two with Kieran Murtagh, before setting up Luke Allen. Unfortunately, the Dartford number four's strike took a deflection and cannoned back off the crossbar (51).

He (Allen) was involved once again four minutes later, as he threaded the ball towards Jebb, who then picked out Marcus Dinanga with a delightful ball. Sadly, Michael Chambers was equally alert to do enough to prevent the Dartford striker from wrapping his foot around the ball.

Dartford were purring at this point, and another terrific move saw Jake Robinson get into a great position only to see his effort hit Oualah's post (63). Then Murtagh made one of his powerful runs, as his teammates passed straight through the Billericay defence. The midfielder shot, and the ball fell to Dinanga, who was never going to miss (65).

Manager, Steve King then made his first two substitutions in quick succession, as Olumide Durojaiye replaced Luke Allen (68) and Ade Azeez came on for Marcus Dinanga (70). His final change came on 78 minutes, when Calvin Kalala left the field to be replaced by Ody Alfa.

Meanwhile, the host's remaining substitutions occurred in the 63rd minute (Greg Halford on for Jack Munns) and on 76 minutes (Anthony Jeffrey on for Anderson Pinto).

Toby Stevenson then made an excellent block to prevent Azeez from netting a third for Dartford (82), before Halford forced Dan Wilks into a routine save at the other end (85).

The result sees Steve King's men stretch an unbeaten run to seven games in all competitions. It also keeps the Darts third in the National League South table, whilst also guaranteeing them a place in the playoffs.

TEAMS

BILLERICAY TOWN: Zaki Oualah, Toby Stevenson, Joe Muscatt, Marvel Ekpiteta, Michael Chambers ©, Henry Ochieng, Kreshnic Krasniqi, Jack Munns, Anderson Pinto, Dylan Gavin, Josh Wright.

SUBSTITUTES: Femi Akinwande, Greg Halford, Niko Muir, Anthony Jeffrey, Sam Skeffington.

DARTFORD: Dan Wilks, Jordan Wynter, Kristian Campbell, Luke Allen, Kory Roberts, Tom Bonner ©, Calvin Kalala, Kieran Murtagh, Jake Robinson, Marcus Dinanga, Jack Jebb.

SUBSTITUTES: Olumide Durojaiye, Ade Azeez, Samir Carruthers, Jordan Greenidge, Ody Alfa.

By Chris Palmer