

WELLING UNITED 2 DARTFORD 2

(PENALTIES: 3-5)

Dartford booked themselves a place in the Kent Senior Cup Final, after coming from behind to rescue a draw before then beating Welling United in a penalty shootout at Park View Road in front of 474 supporters.

The Darts started the first-half brightly enough, with Danny Leonard in particular proving to be a threat along the right-flank. In fact, his first attempt came as early as the third minute when he fired narrowly wide of Sam Jackson's far post after a typical Dartford attacking move.

A similar set of circumstances occurred again three minutes later, only on this occasion the Welling defence managed to block Leonard's second shot of the evening (6). And, the pacey number seven was at it again, as he blitzed passed his man before forcing Jackson into a good save in the twelfth minute.

However, the Wings were a constant threat themselves, and could have opened the scoring seconds before Leonard's sixth minute effort. Mason Saunders-Henry was proving to be a rather lively character, and sent a dangerous ball into the Dartford box. Lewis Haywood got to it first, but thankfully fired wide of Reice Charles-Cook's upright.

With the hosts growing into the game, the visitors came close after Tyrique Hyde sent a drive from distance just wide (19). A minute later, however, the Wings were ahead via a decent Henry Burnett strike.

The visitors responded and were awarded a free-kick after Ody Alfa was fouled in the 23rd minute. With talismanic set-piece taker Jack Jebb on the bench, it was Danny Leonard who stepped up to send a delightful ball into the Welling box, only to see Jackson get there before anybody else could.

But, having taken the lead, the hosts were growing in confidence. And, on the thirty minute mark, they'd doubled their advantage. The Dartford defence failed to clear a corner sufficiently enough, and Henry Burnett punished them a second time.

Once again, Dartford responded and Ody Alfa got on the end of an excellent Tyrique Hyde pass, only to be thwarted by Jackson again (34)!

The Wings started the second forty-five by swapping Harvey Bradbury for Bradley Stevenson, and had opportunities to stretch their lead further. Mason Saunders-Henry was the player causing the Darts problems, as two good runs (on 47 and 55 minutes) went unrewarded due to the lively player failing to test Reice Charles-Cook.

However, by the 57th minute, Steve King's side began pushing the hosts further back into their own half as they upped the tempo. A terrific run and cross by Leonard was met by the head of Jordan Greenidge, but Jackson made the save.

The goalkeeper was forced into action five minutes later, when he managed to stop Leonard's left-footed effort. Yet, on 65 minutes he pulled off a superb double save to thwart an Alfa low drive and then the follow-up from Jake Robinson.

Before that piece of goalkeeping though, both teams made changes in personnel. Welling introduced Ben Allen for Alfie Matthews, whilst Dartford's Jordan Wynter left the field to be replaced by Ali Monsaray. A few minutes later saw Dan Roberts replace Ody Alfa, and Welling brought on Ben Wells for Henry Burnett.

The Darts' pressure finally paid off when Jordan Greenidge got onto the end of another Danny Leonard cross to pull a goal back in the 73rd minute. And, if it wasn't for Jackson, it would have been 2-2 five minutes later. Yet, somehow the goalkeeper made a fine double save to keep out the now rampant visitors.

With five additional minutes to play at the end of the ninety, the Darts were throwing caution to the wind... and deep into stoppage time were rewarded for their efforts. Dan Roberts raced into the box after receiving the ball, Jackson rushed out and took out the Dartford striker. The referee, Mr Aji Ajibola, pointed to the spot, and Jake Robinson converted to pull his team level.

With literally seconds to spare, Steve King sent on Jack Jebb for Che Krabbendam, before the lottery of a penalty shootout was upon us. Hyde, Roberts, Jebb, Greenidge, and Robinson all converted their spot-kicks, whilst Welling's Captain Tom Derry saw his penalty saved by Reice Charles-Cook, as the visitors celebrated a 5-3 shootout success.

So, Dartford's successful defence of the Kent Senior Cup continues, and they'll now face either Hythe Town or Folkestone Invicta in the final.

TEAMS

WELLING UNITED: Sam Jackson, Bradley Pearce, Harvey Bradbury, Lewis Haywood, Mason Saunders-Henry, James McMillion, Tom Derry ©, Cameron Andrews, Alfie Matthews, Henry Burnett, Jack Church.

SUBSTITUTES: Ben Allen, Ryan Bradley, Donald MacDuloy, Bradley Stevenson, Ben Wells.

DARTFORD: Reice Charles-Cook, Jordan Wynter, Che Krabbendam, Olumide Durojaiye, Tom Bonner ©, Danny Leonard, Tyrique Hyde, Jake Robinson, George Porter, Ody Alfa, Jordan Greenidge.

SUBSTITUTES: Dan Roberts, Ade Azeez, Jack Jebb, Jayden Boulton, Ali Monsaray.

By Chris Palmer