

## **DARTFORD 1 HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE 2**

Dartford fell to a first defeat of the season, as an organised and physical Havant and Waterlooville side took the spoils in an entertaining encounter at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park in front of 979 supporters.

The visitors were fast out of the blocks, and their high press and swift counter-attacking caused the Darts a few problems during the opening exchanges. Gianni Crichlow was in impressive form from the start, and almost registered an assist as early as the second minute. His dangerous cross from the right-flank found the head of Jake McCarthy. Thankfully, he couldn't keep his header down, but the warning signs were there for Alan Dowson's side.

The pressure paid off six minutes later, and this time Crichlow had his assist. As the Hawks broke down the right-flank once again with pace, the former Braintree Town man whipped in a dangerous cross which Jason Prior headed home.

As the hosts struggled to get a grip on the game, they were almost gifted a way back in the twentieth minute. As the Hawks failed to clear the ball, goalkeeper Ross Worner rushed out in a desperate attempt to kick it clear. But, in a panic, he hit it straight into the path of Samir Carruthers on the half-way line. With Worner way off his line, the Dartford midfielder sent an audacious lob towards the Havant goal, only to see it drop narrowly wide of the upright!

That opportunity spurred on the Darts, and they were denied a possible penalty shout seconds later, after Carruthers was floored inside the Hawks' box. Undeterred, they continued to gain momentum and forced a corner a few minutes later. With the Havant defence thinking they'd cleared the danger, Luke Coulson had other ideas... He collected the ball and delivered a delicious cross towards Davide Rodari, who headed home his first goal in Dartford colours (27).

The hosts smelled blood at this point, as they were clearly on top during the closing stages of the half. Another corner was soon won, and Carruthers managed to get on the end of it... yet, somehow, Havant managed to keep the score level via great goalkeeping by Worner (39).

The second forty-five saw tempers begin to flare, as the visitors began throwing themselves at the ball in an overly aggressive manner. And, sure enough the inevitable occurred in the 54th minute. Rodari and Carruthers combined well to release Coulson, but Billy Clifford had other ideas. Lunging dangerously at Coulson, he took out the Dartford number seven, which subsequently sparked anger from both sets of players. In fact, the only personnel missing were the two goalkeepers! Referee Kirsty Dowle eventually regained control of everyone, and Clifford received a deserved yellow card.

The visitors created a good opportunity for themselves after 58 minutes, but Dan Wilks easily saved Jake McCarthy's effort. Five minutes later saw Paul Doswell make a double substitution, which would prove to be a deciding factor in the outcome of the game.

Gianni Crichlow and Benny Read left the field to be replaced by Danny Wright and Oscar Gobern. The visitors won a corner within seconds, which was sent into the Dartford box. Joash Nembhard managed to head the ball back across the box, and Gobern scored with his first touch (64).

The hosts responded well and were unlucky not to equalise with fifteen minutes remaining, after Worner saved Connor Essam's header. Two minutes prior to that effort saw Alex Wall come on to replace Davide Rodari. Alan Dowson's other substitution saw Dan Roberts replace Keiran Murtagh (80). Meanwhile, Havant's last change saw Mo Faal come on for James Roberts (78).

Alex Wall would then force a free-kick after being fouled just outside the Hawks' box. Luke Coulson sent in a superb ball, which found the head of Essam and ended up in the back of the net (88). However, the goal was chalked off for offside, which ended any hopes Dartford had of getting anything from the game.

On a night where Luke Allen's performance earned him the Man of The Match award, the Darts just couldn't find that final killer ball to earn a point. With a little more creativity and officials' decisions going their way, this one would have been a different result.

## **TEAMS**

**DARTFORD:** Dan Wilks, Jordan Wynter, Samir Carruthers, Connor Essam, Tom Bonner ©, Luke Coulson, Luke Allen, Keiran Murtagh, Davide Rodari, Pierre Fonkeu, Sam Odaudu.

**SUBSTITUTES:** Kristian Campbell, Alex Wall, Maxwell Statham, Tom Wray, Dan Roberts.

**HAVANT & WATERLOOVILLE:** Ross Worner, Joe Newton, Joe Oastler ©, Joash Nembhard, Jake McCarthy, Paul Rooney, Jason Prior, Billy Clifford, Gianni Crichlow, Benny Read, James Roberts.

**SUBSTITUTES:** Oscar Gobern, Danny Wright, Mo Faal, Leon Baker-Neto, Jake Andrews.

**By Chris Palmer**