

DARTFORD 2 HAMPTON & RICHMOND 1

A fired-up Charlie Sheringham came off the bench to score and set up Marvin Herschel, as Dartford returned to winning ways in front of 1,147 supporters at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park.

Before the game kicked-off, a minute's applause was respectfully observed after the sudden passing of lifelong Dartford fan James Caie. The moment was certainly touching, and the Darts would go on to give him and his family an excellent victory this afternoon.

Dartford manager, Alan Dowson, was forced into making a few changes in personnel after last week's FA Cup exit. Midfielder, Adam Lovatt was recalled by his parent club, so Jack Smith slotted into the side after arriving on loan from Stevenage Borough. He was joined by the returning Davide Rodari, Kristian Campbell, and Marvin Herschel.

The first-half was a relatively even affair, as both goalkeepers took centre stage. Dartford's Joe Young was first to step up, as he saved well from the lively Jake Gray after just six minutes.

Then it was Joe Walsh's turn to show what he can do, as he first saved well from Marvin Herschel's effort from a tight angle, before somehow getting down to prevent the follow-up from going in (16)!

The next meaningful opportunity arrived after 35 minutes, and it was the hosts who created it after an attack on the right-flank. New boy Jack Smith managed to send in a dangerous cross after Herschel's cheeky pass, and Davide Rodari connected with a delightful volley. Unfortunately, Walsh was alert to the situation and managed to pull off a terrific save!

As the half entered added on time, Young stepped up to make an excellent save to prevent Tommy Davis' well-taken shot from giving the visitors a half-time lead.

Just like the first-half, Herschel was tormenting the Beavers' left-back Liam Vincent, and was subsequently taken out inside the Hampton box just four minutes after the restart. However, referee Mr Harry Wager, waved away the protests... in fact, this wasn't the only bone of contention that the Dartford faithful would have with the man in the middle this afternoon, but more on that later.

The game appeared to be precariously poised as we reached the hour mark, but felt as though it was heading towards a stalemate. That was until Alan Dowson made a swift double substitution. Off came Jack Smith and Davide Rodari, and on came Keiran Murtagh and Charlie Sheringham. Three minutes later saw the hosts finally find the breakthrough.

Midfield duo Samir Carruthers and Luke Allen combined, and the latter sent Sheringham through. The Dartford striker couldn't miss and slotted in his second goal in consecutive games (63).

Nine minutes later then saw the scorer become the provider. A terrific attacking move ended with Sheringham seeking out Herschel with a great pass, and the Dartford Academy product calmly guided the ball beyond Walsh and into the back of the net to score his first league goal for the Darts (72).

As the hosts controlled proceedings, Alan Dowson would make his final change in personnel after 83 minutes, as Herschel would leave the field to a rapturous applause to be replaced by Pierre Fonkeu.

Meanwhile, the visitors' substitutions came after 70 minutes (Stefan Ilic and Connor Kurran-Browne on for Marcus Sablier and Ade Shokunbi) and 80 minutes (Temi Babalola on for Liam Vincent).

Returning to matters involving the officials, there appeared to be a biased reaction from Mr Wager on the pitch, as similar challenges were treated differently. The referee decided to book five Dartford players (starting as early as the 6th minute!), but just two Beavers. Kristian Campbell, Maxwell Statham, Luke Allen, Keiran Murtagh, and Samir Carruthers all saw yellow, as did Tyrell Miller-Rodney and Brandon Barzey for the visitors.

As we return to the action, Hampton & Richmond were trying desperately to get back into the game, to the point that right-back Tommy Block had a heated exchange with his own coaching staff over a throw-in and missing ball! The hosts looked reasonably comfortable though, and it would take something special to prevent Joe Young from claiming a deserved clean-sheet.

That something special duly arrived three minutes from full-time. A Beaver attack saw the ball eventually fall to Jake Gray on the edge of the Dartford box, and he struck a delightful effort which flew into the top-corner.

It wasn't enough though, as Tom Bonner and Co remained united and strong to secure a valuable victory. Marvin Herschel's performance earned him a deserved Man of The Match award, as the result sees the Darts climb up to eighth in the National League South table.

TEAMS

DARTFORD: Joe Young, Jordan Wynter, Kristian Campbell, Samir Carruthers, Connor Essam, Tom Bonner (c), Luke Allen, Davide Rodari, Maxwell Statham, Jack Smith, Marvin Herschel.

SUBSTITUTES: Alex Wall, Keiran Murtagh, Daniel Jinadu, Pierre Fonkeu, Charlie Sheringham.

HAMPTON & RICHMOND: Joe Walsh, Tommy Block, Ruaridh Donaldson, Tyrell Miller-Rodney, Brandon Barzey, Tommy Wood, Jake Gray, Marcus Sablier, Ade Shokunbi, Tommy Davis, Liam Vincent.

SUBSTITUTES: Alfy Whittingham, Stefan Ilic, Connor Kurran-Browne, Temi Babalola, Ben Shroll.

By Chris Palmer