

DARTFORD 2 EASTBOURNE BOROUGH 1

Midfield duo Samir Carruthers and Luke Allen both scored, as Dartford came from behind to beat Eastbourne Borough in front of 816 supporters at Bericote Powerhouse Princes Park on a cold Tuesday evening.

The hosts began the game well and came close as early as the 10th minute after winning a free-kick in the midfield. Samir Carruthers swung the set-piece long, which found the head of the leaping Connor Essam. However, the defender's powerful header flew the wrong side of Lee Worgan's upright.

Unfortunately, the Darts found themselves behind just four minutes later after a late challenge by Maxwell Statham. The Dartford player was shown a yellow card by referee, Mr Daniel Lamport, before the free-kick was sent into the crowded box where Leone Gravata opened the scoring (14).

Alan Dowson's side responded and came close once again, after Carruthers and Luke Allen combined well. But, the latter's strike failed to trouble Lee Worgan (20). Yet, a minute later saw Charlie Sheringham fouled by Bradley Barry. Once again, Carruthers sent a dangerous free-kick into the box, but Sheringham saw his header somehow get deflected wide of the goal on this occasion.

Connor Essam was then booked for a late challenge on Gravata, who was making a real nuisance of himself throughout this first-half (28). As the resulting free-kick came to nothing, Dartford found themselves level two minutes later.

On this occasion, Sheringham became the provider with a neat pass to his teammate. The Dartford number four then drove into the Eastbourne box, turned his man inside out, before firing past Worgan to draw his side level (30).

Now in control, the hosts went searching to take the lead, drawing two fouls within five minutes. The first of which saw Marvin Herschel floored by Kai Woollard-Innocent (32) after the youngster had made a great run. Carruthers' free-kick came to nothing, but he'd get another opportunity five minutes later.

This time it was Kristian Campbell's turn to be floored by an Eastbourne full-back. Only it was James Vaughan, who went into Mr Lamport's book (37). Sadly, the resulting free-kick came to nothing and the visitors lived to breathe another day.

Marvin Herschel then tried his luck from distance, only to see his effort fly over the crossbar (42), before Leone Gravata almost gave the visitors the lead with the last kick of the half. Causing problems in attack once again, the Eastbourne player managed to breach the defence to get one-on-one with goalkeeper Joe Young. But, Dan Wilks' stand-in was alert to make a fabulous save (45)!

The second forty-five saw the Darts continue to control proceedings, but we had to wait until the 56th minute for an attempt on goal. And, once again, Samir Carruthers was at the centre of it. Kristian Campbell controlled a loose ball well with his chest, which released his teammate Carruthers. He raced through the midfield before firing at goal, only for Lee Worgan to hold the ball comfortably.

Manager, Alan Dowson, was first to react with a change in personnel, as Keiran Murtagh replaced Jack Smith after sixty minutes. That would be followed by Pierre Fonkeu replacing Samir Carruthers (79) and Davide Rodari coming on for Marvin Herschel (82).

Meanwhile, the visitors' reacted after 63 minutes to replace Jake Hutchinson with Gregory Luer, before Simo Mbonkwi came on for Milly Scarlett in the 73rd minute.

As we return to the action, Keiran Murtagh almost edged his side ahead within four minutes of coming on! As Carruthers and Herschel combined to wreck havoc, they fed Murtagh who shot from a tight angle, only to see Worgan save it (65).

Undeterred, the hosts kept probing and were finally rewarded after 68 minutes. Once again, Carruthers was involved as he found Campbell on the left-flank with a great ball. Campbell then floated a delightful ball towards Luke Allen, who's excellent strike found the back of the net.

The visitors responded and came close themselves with fifteen minutes remaining. The opportunity came via their right, as James Vaughan and Shiloh Remy combined well. The latter's cross eventually reached James Hammond on the edge of Dartford's box, but he fired wide of Joe Young's upright.

They came close once again in the 81st minute when Luke Allen was unlucky to lose out in the midfield. However, Young raced out to make the save before any Borough player could reach the ball.

As the visitors continued to press forward, Tom Bonner and Co remained solid enough to prevent them creating any meaningful opportunities. Kristian Campbell found himself in the referee's book for a late challenge late on, as the Darts saw out the game.

Samir Carruthers' efforts earned him a deserved Man of The Match award, as the Darts registered a third league win in a row.

Sadly, the game was stopped during time added on because of a disturbance involving a supporter and one of the Eastbourne players. The event prompted an immediate statement from the Dartford board, which can be found on the social media platforms. Needless to say, such behaviour is unacceptable and the club will deal with the person(s) involved in due course.

It was, however, pleasing to see that all players from both sides remained united as one, and then continued to play once the referee was happy for the game to continue. But, there was no doubt where the three points were heading.

TEAMS

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

SUBSTITUTES: Alex Wall, Keiran Murtagh, Davide Rodari, Daniel Jinadu, Pierre Fonkeu.

EASTBOURNE BOROUGH: Lee Worgan, Kai Woollard-Innocent, Bradley Barry, Mitchell Dickenson, Jayden Perez, James Hammond, Shiloh Remy, James Vaughan, Leone Gravata, Milly Scarlett, Jake Hutchinson.

SUBSTITUTES: Gregory Luer, Simo Mbonkwi, Samuel Ball, De Niro Pinto, Finlay Holter.

By Chris Palmer